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JEREMIAH  
The Man and his Message



# JEREMIAH

## THE MAN AND HIS MESSAGE

By  
J. R. GILLIES

HODDER AND STOUGHTON  
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TO MY CONGREGATION

(TRINITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, HAMPSTEAD),

WITHOUT WHOSE SYMPATHY AND FORBEARANCE

I COULD NOT HAVE PURSUED THOSE LINES OF STUDY,

THE FRUITS OF WHICH I OFFER THEM NOW,

WITH MY BEST THANKS AND PRAYERS.



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## CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

B.C.

646 (?) . . . . .	The Prophet's Birth.
638 . . . . .	Accession of Josiah.
626 . . . . .	The Prophet's Call.
630-625 (?) . . . . .	The Scythian Invasion.
621 . . . . .	Deuteronomic Reformation.
	Battle of Megiddo.
608 . . . . .	Death of Josiah.
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	Publication of the Prophet's Roll.
	Jehoiakim's Death.
597 . . . . .	Reign of Jehoiachin.
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	First Babylonian Captivity.
588 . . . . .	Siege of Jerusalem begins.
587 . . . . .	Fall of Jerusalem.
	Second Babylonian Captivity.
568 . . . . .	Nebuchadrezzar in Egypt.
538 . . . . .	Fall of Babylon.
537 . . . . .	Return of the Exiles.

## LITERATURE

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Also in English, *Expositor's Bible* (Ball and Bennett, 2 vols.) ; Driver's Jeremiah ; Life and Times of Jeremiah, by Canon Cheyne ; Studies in Jeremiah, by Rev. A. Ramsay.

Also articles in *Encyclopaedia Biblica* (Jeremiah, by Schmidt), and *Bible Dictionary* (Jeremiah, by A. B. Davidson) ; with articles by Dr. Davidson and Dr. Stalker in the *Expositor* ; articles in *Studien ü. Kritiken*, and *Zeitschrift für die alt-test. Wissenschaft* (ZATW).

See also Driver's Deuteronomy (*International Critical Commentary*) ; and his *Hebrew Tenses* ; Davidson's *Syntax* ; and Gesenius-Kautzsch, *Hebrew Grammar* (G.K.).



## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

**J**EREMIAH was born at Anathoth. He received his call to the prophetic office in the thirteenth year of Josiah, 626 B.C. ; but he seems to have remained in comparative retirement for some years, a person of no particular account in the councils of his people. Beginning work early in life, he prophesied for a period of forty years, saw the downfall of his country, and apparently ended life as an exile in Egypt.

The age in which he lived was stirring and eventful beyond most. The year 626 was marked by an invasion of semi-savage tribes, known as Scythians. In 620 came the Religious Reformation under Josiah ; in 608, his defeat and death on the field of Megiddo. The Renaissance of Egypt, an ancient empire which, after a period of decadence, started about this time on a fresh career of political and military aggression, could not fail powerfully to affect Jewish history. Later on, in 607, came the fall of Nineveh and the dissolution of the Assyrian Empire. This was followed by the emergence at Babylon of a new Power destined, for half a century, to sway the sceptre of the East. Seldom has a single lifetime witnessed transformation so sudden and so complete. The old landmarks entirely disappeared. The old forms of thought and speech became obsolete at once. New social and political conditions called for a new conception of Religion. A man with our prophet's wide outlook

and quick sympathy could not fail to respond ; and, if he helped to make the age in which he lived, it was because he himself was largely made by it.

It will help us in our study of the Book of Jeremiah if we can form some general idea of the man who wrote it.

1. First of all, then, we must realize that he makes no pretence to be a theological teacher. The prophets were not dogmatists ; least of them all was Jeremiah one. He apprehends truth in the concrete. The material with which he deals is not abstract ideas but religious experience—first and foremost, his own. Among the most distinctive of his writings is a series of poems relating to the Scythian Invasion already mentioned ; in which, from first to last, there is practically no dogma, nor any attempt to convey theological truth, but only the quick response of a tender and passionate nature to what was passing around. It is, I think, certain that these Scythian Songs ("dirges" might be a better name for them, but there is too much of life and action in them to permit the phrase) were the earliest of his utterances ; and from that fact we may infer that he was called to the front, and became conscious of his prophetic vocation, not in connexion with any special message he had to deliver, but under what was, to him, the imperious necessity to sympathize with his people under a sudden and terrible calamity.

2. We notice an interesting and remarkable change that passed over him during his public ministry. It is true of all of us that we learn by every attempt we make to teach others ; and often we learn much more than we teach. Now in the early stages of the prophet's career we observe that he deals largely with the past history of his people. In this, no

doubt, he was influenced by Hosea and the Book of Deuteronomy; although his treatment of the theme is always independent, and sometimes original. The splendid Revelation of Divine Grace with which Israel's history began, seemed to lie in the immediate past. It was "but yesterday," and the shadow of it lay with consecrating power on himself and, as he believed, on his people. However different the time and the mood, there had, as yet, been no definite break from the past. It was still possible, and natural, to appeal to the people on the ground of it. At this time his horizon was wide and his spirit tranquil. It seemed not too much to hope that the religious fervour of Judah, rekindled by the example of a pious king, might prevail to the conversion of Israel; and that thus, at last, the disastrous effects of the disruption of the kingdom might be undone. But the rejection of Josiah's reform, and the definite and final relapse of the people into idolatry under Jehoiakim, ended these bright dreams. Steadily the horizon narrowed about the prophet. Instead of hoping for Israel, he came to despair even of Judah, and was left with nothing certain, nothing on which he could build, but his own religious experience. On the other hand this change in the situation emphasized the distinction between what was national or dispensational and that which was personal, and therefore of permanent spiritual worth, in religion. In this way it led the prophet to remarkable developments along very fruitful lines of which more must be said afterwards. What had seemed a breakdown proved a new departure; the most important in Israel's history. If, then, there is a unity pervading the utterances of our prophet, it is the unity not of thought in the thinker, but of experience in the Man.

3. For, without doubt, the noblest contribution he makes to our spiritual wealth is not what he says or does, but what he himself is. No study could be more instructive than such a personality as Jeremiah. Certainly he does not answer to the idea of a saint, current among us. The worse perhaps for us ! The vehemence of the Oriental characterizes his passionate outbursts. He curses roundly the day of his birth, and heaps invectives on those who, like Pashhur and Hananiah, have the misfortune not to agree with him. He makes no pretence to the spurious spirituality which lifts a man above his surroundings, which discredits Nature and leaves him impervious to her appeals. On the other hand, how gentle he can be ; with what strength of will, tenacity of purpose, wealth of affection and reserve of spiritual power ! Without the commanding genius of Isaiah, he is far more sympathetic. Isaiah lectures his contemporaries on every subject under the sun, from the Temple-worship to the contents of a lady's wardrobe. But he does it all with a certain aloofness, as one whose " soul was like a star, and dwelt apart." Jeremiah identifies himself with his people ; burdens himself with their sorrows, confesses, as his own, the sins he spent a lifetime in combating. There is a note of intimacy in all he writes which gives peculiar value to his representations of contemporary life. To Isaiah the Name of Jahveh<sup>1</sup> " comes from afar," a distant portent, like a storm cloud fringed with fire. To Jeremiah it is rather the secret spring of all the sweetness and strength of his own religious life. His writings furnish us with the highest

<sup>1</sup> Throughout, I have adopted this, probably the original form of the great Name, better known to us as Jehovah.

example of a department of Literature which includes such noble works as St. Augustine's *Confessions* and the *Imitation of Christ*. Prophecy, originally a state, had become a habit; it was now to become a life.<sup>1</sup> Jeremiah utters truths which are revolutionary in their profound spirituality; but he does more. In himself, he presents us with a new type of the religious life, more near than anything else in the Old Testament to the normal Christian experience.

4. A word may be added about our prophet as an Interpreter of Nature. In this respect, I think, very scanty justice has been done to him. It has been said "that his temper was too sombre, and his spirit too heavy-laden with the burden and mystery of all this unintelligible world, to permit the impressions of external nature to play freely upon his soul. He cannot drag himself away from the scenes and problems of practical life to enjoy the peace and exaltation others have enjoyed as they looked on the face of Nature; his allusions to Nature are pervaded rather by a polemical purpose than by the artistic spirit."<sup>2</sup> There is, of course, a grain of truth in this. His spirit was sombre, for the shadow of a dark age lay on it. The claims of office left him little time for that leisurely self-culture and technical training which are essential to the highest success in literature or art. But that cannot obscure what is clear as sunlight on every page he wrote—the quick, patient, and observant eye with which he regarded Nature, or the keen enjoyment and ready response with which he followed her in all her changeful moods. In this, which we may call the Sense of Nature (Natur-gefühl), he has, I take

<sup>1</sup> See Dr. A. B. Davidson, in the *Dict. of the Bible*.

<sup>2</sup> See Dr. Stalker in the *Expositor*, 1895.

it, no equal among the prophets. He was one born to be a poet, though doomed to spend his life in controversy. It is not, of course, by any mere enumeration of references to Nature that one can vindicate his claim in this respect. Among English poets Wordsworth is admittedly the poet of Nature. But why? As a word painter he is inferior to Tennyson and many others. Nature is not to him a mirror in which, by way of analogy, he sees his own experience reflected. She stands in too close and vital a relation for that. She is a living organism of which the poet's soul is an integral part. There is a constant and subtle interchange between them, so that his experience is not only stimulated, but perfected and expressed, by his surroundings. A ruined cottage suggests the family life once sheltered by it; whose misfortunes, bravely borne, cast a shade of pleasing melancholy over the poet's soul. The bleating of a stray sheep is the voice of the solitude, which infects him with its sadness. A wayside flower awakens in him thoughts too deep for tears. Now it is this sense of community between Nature and man—of that larger life in which his own and his people's is at once rooted and realized, that comes out in almost every page of Jeremiah's writings, and vindicates, from any superficial criticism, his claim to be the poet among the prophets. To him a landscape is, in effect, "a state of mind." Judgment is wrought out in the desolation of the landscape, from which every trace of life has been swept; while Grace is crowned by the showers that soften the earth, and the ripening of the vintage, and the murmur of distant folds. I would particularly call the attention of the student to the unrivalled power possessed by this man to represent, through the medium of sound, the most elementary ideas, such

as loneliness, or desolation ; wherein he is again the forerunner of our own great Nature-poet.<sup>1</sup> The skilful use of often repeated refrains (e.g. "Without man and without beast," "None dwelling there," "None passing by," "None gathering up") is not with him a mere trick of style, as it became with his imitators ; it is the effort of a highly sensitive spirit to perpetuate and convey, in a single phrase, the momentary impression made by some scene or event. It only remains here to notice that Jeremiah is the one instance of a prophet who traces the birth of his spiritual life to the influence of Nature. It was amid the blossoming of the almond trees, and with the breath of spring fanning his cheek, that the Spirit of God first stirred in him ; and through life he never lost the impression of that hour.<sup>2</sup>

In his recent work on Jeremiah, Dr. Driver, while recognizing the "tendency" of the prophet to cast his prophecies into the rhythmical form of Hebrew poetry, professes himself unable, except in a very few cases, to represent this to the English reader "without alterations of the text which he is not prepared to introduce." It is, of course, with the utmost diffidence that one parts company from a guide so safe and so wise as Dr. Driver, even with so brilliant a scholar as Duhm or Erbt to take his place. And it would be absurd to suppose that Jeremiah always "talked poetry" ; or that the mere fact that a passage is in prose is proof that it is not Jeremian. Style varies with mood and matter. On the other hand there are whole passages where the poetical form is quite indisputable ; elsewhere, a comparison of the Hebrew text with the Greek version suggests just

<sup>1</sup> See Pater's *Appreciations*.

<sup>2</sup> Chap. i, 11-12.

the alteration which is needful to restore it ; sometimes the omission of a phrase, in itself redundant, a variant or expletive, is all that is required. I am convinced that no translation, however accurate and sympathetic, can convey to the reader any idea of that rhythmic quality which made the utterances of Jeremiah at once charming and memorable to his contemporaries, unless it accept the risk and do something to preserve their poetic form. For these reasons I have thought it wise to make the attempt. The task is of course greatly lightened by the labours of those German scholars whom I have named. Only those who know their work can realize how deeply I am indebted to them.

There are three preliminary points which it is well to face and, if possible, to settle before we begin that detailed study of the text which lies before us.

I. As to the Deuteronomic Reformation ; what it was, and how the prophets stood toward it.

It was a great day when the High Priest Hilkiah found in the Temple courts a roll purporting to be the Book of the Law of Jahveh, and sent it by the hand of Shaphan, the scribe, to the palace. There is no reason to doubt that the book, thus unearthed, was the Book of Deuteronomy practically as we have it now ; and a brief examination of its contents will form an excellent introduction to our prophet's text. The characteristic element of Deuteronomy is very striking. It is suffused by a tender and beautiful humanity, and lays stress on such points as personal purity, the sanctity of home life, reverence for the past, and a chivalrous consideration for the poor and oppressed. Against the idolatry which had swept in, transforming the worship of the people, it

proclaimed with new emphasis the Unity of Jahveh. "Hear ! O Israel, Jahveh, thy God, is one God."<sup>1</sup> The words do not, of course, exclude the existence of other gods ; but they deny them any authority in presence of the One. This Unity is closely connected with the Spirituality of Jahveh. No form or semblance of Him had been seen, and none must be associated with His worship. The work of a man's hands, however exquisite, can never suggest the source from which he derives his being ; and even the contemplation of the heavenly bodies leaves him still within the finite, and far short of God. It is the moral qualities of Jahveh which are prominent ; His patience and faithfulness and compassion towards the Covenant people. For these there can be no material equivalent. From the Unity and Spirituality of Jahveh the Divine-Sovereignty is deduced. His Unity, an abstract truth, finds its equivalent in the undivided homage which He requires ; His Spirituality is reflected in the nature of that homage. "Jahveh thy God is one God. And thou shalt love Jahveh, thy God, with all thy heart, and soul, and strength and mind." It should be noted that these conclusions as to the Godhead are reached, not so much by speculation, as by experience.

Jahveh being such, His worship must correspond. Those degrading customs with which the heathen honoured their deities are utterly disallowed. Even the sacrificial system which prevailed in Israel, while recognized and enforced, is yet subordinated to ethical aims. To know God, to do His will, to cleave to Him at all costs, this is at once the religion and the life of His people. Particularly we notice how the fear

<sup>1</sup> Deuteronomy vi. 4.

of Jahveh and His love are here combined in a way as certainly novel as it is profoundly true. The fear of Jahveh is not physical in its basis, nor instinctive in its action ; nor does it tend to bondage. It is based on the knowledge of His nature, and the admission of His claims, and passes imperceptibly into a love, which is not so much its corrective as its complement and crown. Such fear is the shadow of love.<sup>1</sup>

To preserve the worship of Jahveh from the taint of impure and alien elements, it is enacted that it shall be carried on not, as hitherto, at any convenient spot, not, as the people loved to have it, under shady trees or on breezy heights which rise to heaven, nor beside their own homesteads and in immediate connexion with their domestic life ; but in Jerusalem and within the Temple courts. The change thus contemplated was serious, the step apparently retrograde. Tolerable only as a discipline required by the conditions of the time ; it is intelligible only as "a providential stage in the purification of the popular idea of God."<sup>2</sup> Under Josiah, a devout and sympathetic ruler, the Deuteronomic programme was sanctioned and enforced ; and for a time it seemed as if the evil had been killed out by the roots. But the people were ill prepared for such a revolution. Their attitude probably meant concession to royal influence rather than any change of personal conviction ; and, on the death of the king, they reverted to habits which had never lost their hold. The worship of the high-places was re-established ; and, with a rebound from the enforced Purism of the previous reign to the natural idolatry of their hearts, they plunged into

<sup>1</sup> Deuteronomy vi, 2, 3 ; also xi, 13 and 22, etc.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Driver.

excesses unknown before. Thus the immediate result of the Deuteronomic legislation was to confirm the evil it proposed to cure. But it did more. To the reforming zeal of the orthodox party within the State, it gave a powerful impulse in a very questionable direction. It concentrated attention on the externals of worship, rather than on the essence of religion. It removed into distance, and invested with an unnatural dread, that Divine presence which had given its power and charm to human life. "Pharisaism and Deuteronomy were born on the same day."

From the incidental references he makes to it, we gather that Jeremiah was an interested and sympathetic spectator of the new movement. Indeed, with chap. xi before us, we can hardly doubt that he lent it his active support. After the writings of Hosea, there was no book that so powerfully impressed him as Deuteronomy; his religious conceptions are moulded by it, he refers to it, quotes from it, bases on it his most earnest appeals. We shall find him, to the last, tenacious of its fundamental principles in the attitude which he maintains (*a*) towards the Nature-worship of the local shrines, and (*b*) towards Jerusalem, which he regards as the one centre of Jahveh-worship for the whole nation, in the future as in the past. On the other hand, his attitude towards it is always free; and the main business of his life was not to support it, but rather to protest against the idea that it had done its work. The greatest hindrance he encountered was not the heathen proclivities openly acknowledged by a section of the nation, but the easy, indolent spirit of self-confidence which prevailed among the majority, the disposition to rest on what had been attempted by legislative enactments, to confound external

conformity with spiritual affinity, and repression with regeneration. Already the spirit of Pharisaism was at work.

2. As to the prophet's relation to foreign powers.

According to chap. i Jeremiah was raised up "to be a prophet over the nations"; and popular belief has credited him with prompt and effective intervention on the field of international politics. But this, according to Duhm, is "popular imagination," based on a confusion of what is authentic and what is legendary in the text. The real Jeremiah, according to Duhm, was cast in a more modest mould—a peasant-priest who wept over the sorrows of his own people, and for whom, when Jerusalem had fallen, the end of the world had come. We shall have constantly to choose between these two conceptions of our prophet's mission, retaining or rejecting phrases, verses, and whole chapters, as we incline to the one or the other. And I think it must be granted that Duhm is not amiss in his conviction that popular imagination has been busy here, and has done not a little in the way of transforming fact to fiction. Not content with a prophet who, like all inspired men, had an open eye, a wide range of vision, and profound insight into spiritual truth, we have conceived one for ourselves who transcends the fundamental conditions of human experience, and expatiates, through space and time, with a secular largeness and freedom which baffles every effort that we may make to follow him. This Jeremiah appeals to generations yet unborn. He holds commerce with nations whose names were hardly known to his contemporaries. He presides over historical developments of which the germs were not in existence while he lived. He not only survives the fall of Jerusalem but anticipates

the rise and fall of great empires in comparison with which Judah was the small dust of the balance. Like a vast Colossus, he bestrides the globe and casts his shadow down the ages. He is less a man, dealing with fellow-men for righteousness, than a symbol of that Universal Providence which appoints the destiny of all. Let me give an illustration of the dualism which “ popular imagination ” has introduced into our conception of the prophet. In chap. xxix we have an authentic communication from Jeremiah, a letter written by him in the fourth year of Zedekiah to the exiles in Babylon. Nothing could be more sane and wise, nothing more religious, than its tone and spirit. Yet, on the evidence of a brief note which, rightly understood, makes no claim to be part of the original text or to possess any prophetic value,<sup>1</sup> it is believed that in the same year he covered a Roll with woes and curses directed against the great city, and forwarded it to Babylon, with orders to heave it overboard and sink it in the Euphrates ! It is possible to reconcile these two communications, but only on the Popish doctrine of Reserve, which, I take it, was even more alien to the prophetic character than it is repugnant to a Protestant conscience. It is further believed that, while he imposed on others the duty of submission to Babylon, he himself not only foresaw her end, but marshalled the forces which were to destroy her, and gloried openly, and with a savage delight, over the prospect of her Fall. On the contrary, and as the result of a careful study of the text, I believe

<sup>1</sup> Chap. li, 59-64 ; verse 64 ends thus : “ They shall be weary ; so far are the words of Jeremiah.” That is, the proper prophecy closes with verse 58 ; the appended note is from a scribe.

that there is no one passage, certainly or even probably Jeremian, in which the Fall of Babylon is foretold.

But while there is truth in Duhm's criticism of the popular conception of our prophet, I believe the position he himself assumes is no less extreme. It is admitted by all that chaps. xxvii and xxviii are, at least in substance, authentic. Now in them we see Jeremiah playing a very masterful part in the politics of his day and wrecking a defensive alliance between the various principalities of Syria. These chapters, even if they stood alone, would justify the representation of the prophetic call given in chap. i. But they do not stand alone. Chaps. xxv, xliii, xlvi, however manipulated by editorial hands, are certainly based on authentic documents, and they prove how far our prophet was from refusing the great rôle thrust on him by Providence. Indeed, in the age in which he lived, it was impossible, even for religious purposes, to maintain the isolation of Judah. No man could be a prophet at all, who was not, in a sense, a prophet for all. In transcending the national standpoint, Jeremiah does what every true prophet did, he conforms to the ideals of his own age, which were distinctly international. Certainly he never ignores the ethical postulates of prophecy. He concerns himself strictly with the problems, pressing problems, of his own age. But these, from their very nature, carried him far beyond the merely provincial into the realm of universal truth. He speaks in the name of Jahveh, Maker of heaven and earth, Lord of that new world that was then only opening up before men's eyes; and the authority by which he speaks involves the universal application which he gives to his message.

3. In chap. xxxvi we are told that, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, the prophet was instructed to commit to writing "all the words which Jahveh had spoken through him to the people . . . from the day that I spake to thee, from the days of Josiah, until now." If we put aside as needless, and therefore intolerable, the idea of a supernatural impulse given to the prophet's memory, there is just one possible explanation of the process which is suggested here. During his ministry it had been the prophet's habit, in moments of spiritual exaltation, to throw the truth as conceived by him, i.e. the message sent through him, into poetic form—jets of thought and feeling, lyrical outbursts, with a strong infusion of the proverbial element. Such utterances, from their nature, tended to recur, and thus to impress themselves on the mind both of the speaker and of his hearers. It was on this store he now drew; and in this way we may quite naturally explain the fact that nearly all the utterances of the prophet which have been preserved for us are poetic in form. Of the original Roll, as written by Baruch to the prophet's dictation, we have no direct knowledge. It was burnt by an angry king as soon as it was writ and read. But its place was taken by another, in substance the same, but with certain additions which, no doubt, were meant to bring it up to date. If we may anticipate the results of the study which lies before us, we shall identify the prophet's Roll with the first six chapters of the present Book of Jeremiah. We find there a summary of his early teaching; a series of Scythian songs, by which, first of all, he won the ear of his people; and certain insertions which reflect the situation or the spirit of his own maturer years. The personal matter contained in chap. i

was not inappropriate by way of introduction. Particularly we notice the pathetic and impressive passage, chap. vi, *vv.* 27–30, in which he confesses failure, and returns to Jahveh the sacred charge entrusted to him; a passage which, premature at an earlier date than 604, must have formed a fitting and formal close to this re-statement and publication of his message. Apparently certain portions of chap. xxv were added to the Roll by way of appendix. But Baruch, who wrote the Roll at the prophet's dictation, was no mere scribe. There is a large section of the book awaiting our study which is narrative in form. It speaks of the prophet in the third person, and therefore cannot have come from his own hand, while yet it betrays an eye-witness, and is evidently the work of one who could say of what he describes: *Pars omnium fui.* In default of any better, indeed of any other explanation, we may safely attribute this to Baruch. We may suppose that after the fall of the city, and possibly after Jeremiah's death, Baruch, whilst still an exile in Egypt, jotted down and prepared for publication those Memorabilia to which all lovers of the prophet are so deeply indebted. Of their original scope and plan we cannot speak. We know only the little that has been preserved for us, and that little disjointed and scattered through the book. The bulk of it will be found towards the close, and comprises chaps. xxvi–xxix, xxxiv–xlv. It is further probable that many of the prophet's utterances, which were not included by him in the Roll, would live in the memory of his hearers; and that, from time to time after his death, they would be grouped together with more or less of insight, and committed to writing with more or less of accuracy. These form what is now the heart of the Book—the various

sections from chap. vii to chap. xxiii. Each of them is accompanied by introductory notes, mainly historical, descriptive of the circumstances in which the various oracles were supposed to originate.<sup>1</sup> The more interesting and reliable of these notes are probably based on the *Memorabilia* of Baruch, and serve greatly to enlarge our knowledge of the prophet's character and work. It is evident from the various headings of these sections that each of them was originally designed for independent circulation. Their value varies according to the proportion in each of what is originally and authentically prophetic, to the editorial setting it has received. That which most of all distinguishes them from the rest of the Book of which they now form a part, is the prominence given to the editorial "idea" which lends unity to each section. The formative process which resulted in our present book was not yet complete. A great personality attracts others. Our prophet made disciples who drank in his spirit, and set themselves to continue and to complete his work. Their phraseology is strongly Jeremian; and with more or less of success they seek to maintain his standpoint. Yet the tone and outlook of their writings is often quite distinct; and the attitude they adopt toward foreign powers, e.g. Babylon, necessarily varies with the political situation in which they found themselves. It is to these disciples of the prophet we owe, I believe, the greater part of

<sup>1</sup> Compare the story, as told by Sir W. Muir in his *Life of Mahomet*, of Zeid ibn Thâbet, who "sought out the Suras and fragments from every quarter, and gathered them together from date leaves and tablets of white stone and from the breasts of men," thus rescuing from oblivion the utterances of Mahomet which are now preserved in the Koran. (*Life of Mahomet*; Introduction, pp. 19, 20.)

the so-called Oracles of the Nations (chaps. xlvi-li). To one of them we owe that most important section which we may describe as the Hymn of Praise (chaps. xxx-xxxiii), in which genuine fragments from the prophet's lips and narratives borrowed from Baruch's Memorabilia are combined with other passages, poetic and prosaic, which display all the marks of a later and decadent age.

Thus we recognize four elements in the book ; (a) prophetic, i.e. directly from Jeremiah's lips ; (b) sub-prophetic, from the Memorabilia of Baruch ; (c) popular, comprising miscellaneous and anonymous groupings of genuine prophetic oracles ; (d) progressive, consisting of applications of prophetic ideas and principles to later situations by those, his disciples, who owed their inspiration to the teaching and example of the great master. And then, to complete our survey of a process whose duration covered centuries, we have to reckon with the tendency on the part of Jewish scribes to tamper with their text ; the result of which, in the present case, has been at points hopelessly to corrupt it, and, all over, to obscure the original poetic form of the prophetic oracles. It is not necessary to enter on the question as to the relation of our Hebrew (Massoretic) text to the various Greek versions, and particularly the Septuagint (LXX). I believe that it is not possible to justify a general preference for either version. I have sought to compare them at every point, giving the preference to one or other, as the case may require.

To sum up ; it is evident that in the survey which lies before us, we shall find ourselves dealing with what is not so much a book, the product of a single mind, as a Literature, the product of many minds, and of many and divers ages. For the Category of Unity,

which fails us here, we must substitute that of Continuity as our guide. The task that lies before us may be briefly outlined thus :

- (a) To sift the original and prophetic from the sub-prophetic and editorial in the text ;
- (b) as far as it is possible, to restore to their original poetic form those Jeremian oracles which have been preserved ;
- (c) to mark the transition of thought and feeling effected by time and reflected in the various elements that enter into the composition of the text ;
- (d) to apply to our own lives those divine truths which, however variously communicated, have become the common heritage of the Church in every age and in every land.

## THE PROPHET'S CALL

### CHAPTER I

THE first three verses of chap. i furnish us with brief disjointed notes mainly personal and chronological. From verse 1 we learn that Jeremiah was born at Anathoth, a Levitical city in Benjamin, two or three miles N.E. of Jerusalem, and, no doubt, dominated by it. Hence we may explain his natural fitness for the prophetic office, i.e. his insight into the ideal and actual in the history of his people, priestly lore and patriotic fervours of the capital. In *vv.* 2, 3, we see the background of his ministry, varying political conditions, bright days under Josiah, followed by a rapid and hopeless decline under Jehoiakim and Zedekiah.

[It should be noted that verse 2 indicates a point of time; verse 3, a period. The brief reigns of Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin are entirely overlooked. This introductory paragraph is clearly composite. Probably verse 2, in a fuller form, was originally the preface to chap. i. A later, but still incomplete record of the prophet's career is suggested by verse 3. As an introduction to the book in its present latest form, verse 1 completes the heading.]

With verse 4 we pass at once to the prophet's call. Pascal says: "The last thing one finds out in writing a book, ought to come first." That is to say, the last reflects light on the first, and gives the key to all that went before it. It was so here. The outcome of Jere-

miah's long and chequered career was the conviction that Jahveh had sent him. Three steps may be noted in connexion with his call (*v.* 5).

(a) "I knew thee." Here is Foreknowledge ; which, as divine, is not merely notional and speculative, but practical and efficacious. For those who, like Jeremiah, learned to think within the sphere of Revelation, Plato's ideal world was anticipated by the Doctrine of Predestination. It is as we are rooted in the Eternal, that the element of steadfastness passes over into our lives. (b) "I sanctified thee." No moral significance is to be attached to this phrase. As the vessels of the sanctuary were set apart for holy use, as we consecrate a church to be the House of God, so with the child yet unborn. Only, in the case of a child more is implied than mere relationship. There is the nature (as distinct from character) toned and tempered into subtle harmony with destiny. Nothing in history is more remarkable than the congenital fitness of men like St. Paul and Luther for their life's work. (c) "I gave thee as a prophet to the nations." Attention is challenged at once to the wide outlook suggested here. It is impossible to separate any organism from its proper environment. At an earlier period in Israel's history, a career like Jeremiah's would have been a glaring anachronism. The Exile, which terminated the isolation of his people, suggested and required the note of Universalism which marks a new departure in prophecy.

Youth, training, and temper, alike protest. We see the prophet trembling on the brink of the "Great Refusal." "Then I said, Ah, Lord Jahveh, behold I cannot speak, for I am a child." He is however reassured by a representation of the infinite resources at his command (verses 7-10). There is first the

Divine Purpose ("I send thee") ; then the Divine Presence ("I am with thee") ; and, further, the Divine Power ("He put forth His hand"). Here, as elsewhere, Grace specializes, "He touched my lips." With this we may compare Ezekiel's call, sealed by the same sacramental touch. But in Ezekiel's case the message itself is given ; here, only the impulse to speak. We do not wonder that the prophet hesitated when we learn the nature of his mission. Judgment and mercy are the two factors in it. But Judgment is first and, to the prophet's own consciousness, overwhelmingly predominant ; only, in the distant background, Mercy smiles. "I have this day set thee over the nations, to pluck up and pull down, to delete and destroy, to build and to plant.

[It must be remembered that according to chap. xxxvi, this record of his early experience was made in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, i.e., a quarter of a century later than the events themselves. In its present form the chapter belongs to the second half of the prophet's ministry ; and what Reflection did for others, it must have done for him. It made manifest those wider relations and further issues of his work to which he gives expression here.]

What from one point of view is the beginning of the prophet's ministry, from another point of view is the outcome of the spiritual experience which had prepared him for it. Of this preparatory discipline he proceeds to speak.

Verses 11, 12. He recalls a day when he wandered through the fields round Anathoth. The winter was past, the rains were gone ; and the almond tree was in blossom. In Hebrew, the almond tree is called Shaked, i.e. the tree that wakes up. We know what it is, early in April, to see even a spray of delicate pink-

white blossom against the dark branches, here and there a single almond tree coming into flower. Imagine then, miles of continuous almond trees ; the whole plain seeming to wake up from its wintry sleep. That was what Jeremiah saw. Beautiful in itself, it was doubly beautiful because of the promise it brought. It seemed as if the breeze, whispering through the blossom, were Jahveh's voice questioning him : " What seest thou ? " and then interpreting its own symbolism : " I am waking up (Shôkêd) to my work, to perform it." There is more here than a play on words ; there is insight into things. Nature and Grace are two aspects of one Divine order. The yearly miracle of spring is more than a parable, it is a pledge of the Resurrection. What the prophet saw, meant more than he could see. Others said, spring is coming ; he said, Jahveh is waking up. Behind him lay long years of apparent inactivity and indifference on Jahveh's part, but a glorious summer was at hand. In that hour the prophet received " such an impression of the Divine power and goodness as never left him." The practice of the presence of God became, for him, the rule of life.<sup>1</sup>

Verses 13-16. Secondly, we have the vision of the seething cauldron. The year 626 B.C. was marked by an event which affected the prophet's whole life. The East had been startled by an irruption of semi-savage tribes known as Scythians. More will have to be said of them in connexion with chpp. iv-vi. Meantime we must note the impression they made on his youthful spirit. The dust raised by their horses hung like storm clouds over the horizon. He traced their advance by the long black line of ruined homesteads left behind them. The fierce play of brutal passion

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the well-known Letters of Brother Lawrence.

which marked their march suggested the figure of a cauldron fanned by flame till it boils over. The figure was common enough in those days ; the experience was universal. What is peculiar to Jeremiah is the way in which he ponders what others were glad to forget, and sees in it a premonition of things to come. Each wave recedes, but the tide steadily advances up the shore ; the Scythians might retire, but others were ready to take their place. The face of the cauldron was " turned to the Northwards."<sup>1</sup> To a Jew the North was the home of mystery and gloom and all wild, incalculable and destructive forces. Already it had sent forth these Scythians, and other yet greater evils were brewing there for all the land. Inserted here by a later hand, verses 15 and 16 anticipate for us that exposition of the symbol which experience and the slow stern years brought to Jeremiah. Instead of a robber horde he was yet to see a regular army, " all the families of the kingdoms of the North," breaking loose on the land, like the loosening of a girdle or the opening of prison doors. He was yet to see them investing the whole of the city, pitching their tents, and setting their seats against her. The Chaldeans of 604 B.C. were the successors of the Scythians of 626. In the tumult of the last mortal struggle the voice of Jahveh was heard once again, uttering His judgments against the guilty city.

Nothing could be more different than these two visions. In the first all is still life, beauty and promise ; in the second all is human passion, sore travail and strife. We seem to have left the fresh springtime behind ; the sultry dog-days are on us, when the clouds are charged with electricity, and there is thunder in the air. But what is common to both, as the prophet

<sup>1</sup> Reading *Mophnē* instead of *Mippene* (Duhm).

saw them, is the Divine purpose behind. Spring and summer make up the year; judgment and mercy work out God's plan.

For a youth with such a religious experience, with such visions of beauty in his eye and such a burden of sorrow in his soul, there could be only one future. He cannot rest without an earnest effort to share with others the insight he has gained. In the calamities which left so many hard, bitter, and despairing, he would have them see the hand of God working good. A third time Jahveh speaks; this time, as we have seen, with the call to prophecy. "And thou, gird up thy loins and speak to them" (verse 17). It was no easy task; it meant that he stood alone against his people. But, after all, it is only the difficult that is worth doing. And the one thing that wrecks a life, that unmans us, is not opposition from without, however bitter, but the conviction that we have proved false to ourselves and forfeited our claim on God. "Fear them not, lest I affright thee before them." The sense of a Divine mission made him not merely strong, but impregnable. "And behold I make thee this day a fortified city, and an iron pillar, and a bronze wall . . . and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, said Jahveh, to deliver thee." All which came to pass. For Jeremiah, life henceforth was a persistent struggle between a feeling of weakness, on the one hand, and of overmastering duty on the other; between love of his people and loyalty to his God; between dismay at the doom impending, and hope of the Grace to be revealed. Dark days lay before him; but he never forgot the spring morning in the fields around Anathoth, when he saw the almond blossom, and knew that, after long years of seeming inaction, Jahveh was waking up.

## CRITICAL NOTE ON CHAPTER I.

While acknowledging the high interest and religious value of the chapter Duhm denies its Jeremian authorship on the ground of a previous conception of the prophet's mission, which is manifestly inconsistent with it.

Erbt analyses the chapter as follows. According to him verse 17 follows directly on verse 10, and closes the narrative of the prophet's call. The second vision (verses 13 and 14) belongs to the same period. The first vision (verses 11, 12) implies, he thinks, a period of earnest but fruitless labour on the prophet's part. He therefore places it later in his career. He thinks that verses 15 and 16 cannot refer to the Scythians, who were one tribe, nor to the Chaldeans, who formed one kingdom under one king. He therefore refers them to the fall of Nineveh in 607 before the Medians, Chaldeans, and other northern tribes, and thinks that in that great catastrophe the prophet saw an anticipation of the fall of Jerusalem. With respect to verse 17 I would point out that its immediate connexion with verses 7-10 is maintained only by striking out certain phrases, e.g. "At their faces," and "Before them"; and that even then the emphasis with which it opens (*ve'attah, But thou*) seems to require the intervention of verse 14. With respect to the first vision, I think I have given a construction of it which is psychologically tenable and obviates the necessity of removing it from its present context. As to verses 15, 16, it may be granted that they cannot well have been written by the prophet either of the Scythians or of the Chaldeans. But can he have written them, with the fall of Nineveh in his mind? Of so great a catastrophe, could he say anything, without saying much more than this? On the other hand, we have here the phraseology with which later editors describe the Chaldean army (cf. chap. xxxiv, 1-5). Compare also the phrase, "I will utter my judgment against them," with the same phrase, used in the same sense, in chap. xxxix, 5, which is also editorial; and contrast with it the prophet's own use of the phrase in chap. xii, 1. If these two verses are read as a later and editorial insertion, the rest of the narrative may be accepted as a unity, and, in its origin, prophetic.]

## LOQUITUR JAHVEH

### CHAPTERS II—III, VERSE 5

THE first verse of the chapter, absent from the LXX,<sup>1</sup> must be omitted as an editorial gloss. The chapter represents an early address of the prophet to his townsmen of Anathoth. The scenery throughout is that of the country ; the theme, the national apostasy from Jahveh. As yet the prophet knows little of the moral and social degradation forced on his notice at a later period by a prolonged residence in the capital.

There is a remarkable similarity between this chapter and Isaiah, chap. i. It is the Great Arraignment, renewed after another century of probation. But the contrast is equally striking. There, the prophet alleges the moral and social corruption of the people as invalidating the fanatical zeal with which they worship Jahveh. Things have by no means stood still since then. The thin veneer of piety has been worn off ; and here the people unblushingly proclaim their emancipation from Jahveh's yoke (verse 31). There, Jahveh impleads His people before the Great Tribunal ; the process is legal, and carried on in open court. Here, it is more personal, and the tone is correspondingly pathetic and tender. Jahveh pleads with Israel as a man with a faithless wife whom yet, remembering the past, he would fain recall to himself.

<sup>1</sup> “Moreover the Word of Jahveh came to me, saying, Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying.” LXX, καὶ εἰπεν.

There, the heavens are invoked to pronounce judgment ; here, they are silent and sympathetic witnesses of a domestic tragedy. Jahveh's pleading may be outlined thus :

Verses 2, 3. He recalls the earlier days of the people, the freedom and abandonment of a first love. The verses are in the prophet's favourite measure—double lines, the first with three, the second with two, accented syllables. Two such double lines make a stanza. We render thus :

v. 2. I remember, for thee, the kindness of thy youth,  
           The love of thine espousals ;  
   Thy going after Me in the wilderness,  
           In a land untilled.

v. 3. A sacred thing to Jahveh was Israel,  
           First fruits of His increase ;  
   All that devoured him paid the penalty ;  
           Evil came upon them.

In the eyes of the prophet the exile period represented Israel's halcyon days. It witnessed the betrothal of the nation to Jahveh as the national God. In Jahveh's eyes Israel was a sacred thing, precious as the firstling of the flock, or the first ripe sheaf laid on His altar. To touch them was sacrilege, involving a heavy penalty.<sup>1</sup>

Verses 4-13. Jahveh's tone changes as He contrasts the early history of the people with their later past ; His own faithfulness with their apostasy. This apostasy is all the worse because it has been headed by the ecclesiastical and civil leaders of the people. The priests are described as " those that handle the law " ; a reference possibly to the ancient custom of

<sup>1</sup> Asham ; cf. Leviticus v. vv. 6, 15.

divining by means of the Urim and Thummim ;<sup>1</sup> possibly to the Book of the Law lately unearthed in the Temple courts, and now in the priests' hands for their guidance. Either way, the contrast is one between an external, formal contact and a spiritual intuition : "They knew me not." As against the apostasy of His own people, Jahveh appeals to the tenacity with which the Gentiles adhere to such crude conceptions of the Deity as survive among them. Travel west to the Kitians, i.e. Cyprus, or east to Kedar, i.e. Arabia, where will you find such fickleness, or infidelity, as in Israel ? A twofold folly has been committed by the people. "They have forsaken the fountain, and they have hewed out cisterns." The fountain (Mākōr) is a large reservoir fed by springs, such as abound in Palestine. The cistern has no such constant supply ; it is purely artificial, and often, through leakage, empty. So then, the people have exchanged God and satisfaction for the vain hopes set on man.

[These verses (verses 4-13) are rejected by Duhm on account (a) of a Deuteronomic element which pervades them, and, (b) of the absence of the poetic form. The former consideration can hardly be pressed on those who take a different view of the prophet's relation to the new movement, and, while it is true that the rhythm has been hopelessly damaged in the process of transmission, there are still traces of it, as in the refrains, "None passing through," "None dwelling there," (verse 6) ; so also in verses 11, 12.

Hath a nation changed its gods,  
 Which are no gods ?  
 But my people hath changed their glory  
 For that which profiteth not.  
 Be astonished at this, ye heavens !  
 And be greatly amazed !

It is interesting to find ourselves here following in the footsteps of St. Paul, that profound thinker and diligent student

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Deut. xxxiii, 8 ; Isaiah xxviii, 6.

of the Word of God. We see him bending over his copy of the prophet's Roll, and making an inward note of verse 5. It became, in his rich mind, the germ of that fine piece of Christian philosophy (Romans i. 20-23), in which he traces the influence of a materialized conception of the Deity on the character and life of the nation : "They became vain in their imagination, and their foolish heart was darkened."]

From verse 14 the poetic form reappears, and is maintained throughout the rest of the chapter in eight strophes, each of six double lines. As a fine specimen of the prophet's style the passage may be given entire

## I

Verse 14. Now then is Israel a servant,  
A home-born slave ?  
Why is he become a prey,  
His cities wasted ?

Verse 15. The young lions roar over him ;  
They utter their voice ;  
They make the land desolate,  
Without inhabitant.

Verse 16. The sons also of Noph and Tahpanhes  
Have shaven thy head.

Verse 17. Is not this come on thee, forsaking  
Jahveh, thy God ?

The question of verse 14 is startling, and reveals the degradation into which the Covenant People have fallen. Is not Israel, as a servant, the property of Jahveh ? As one born in the house, is he not under the protection of his master's roof ? Why then is he bought and sold, a prey to the aliens ? Cannot Jahveh defend his own ? Egypt on one side, and Assyria on the other, are like young lions roaring over the carcass of a kid ; the land is desolate. The sons of Noph and Tahpanhes, in verse 16, are probably marauding bands detached from Pharaoh Necho's

victorious army, after the battle of Megiddo (608 B.C.).<sup>1</sup> The "shaving of the head" (a doubtful but picturesque phrase) describes the devastation wrought by them. The poor pasture, left after protracted drought, is cropped bare; the wretched peasantry are left to perish. On this interpretation, the verse reflects the political situation under Jehoahaz and in the early years of Jehoiakim, and must have been added by the prophet in 604.

## II

Verse 18. What hast thou to do in Egypt's way,

Drinking the waters of the Nile?

What hast thou to do in Ashur's way,

Drinking the waters of the river?

Verse 19. Thine adversities shall correct thee;

Know thou, and see!

Yea, my fear is not in thee,

Saith Jahveh, thy God.

Verse 20. For, from of old, thou hast broken thy yoke,

And burst thy bands.

And thou said'st: "I will not serve";

A wanton harlot, thou!

Still, in their folly, the people persist. There were two parties in the State; one more conservative, reverting to the old friendly relations with Egypt; the other looking to the North, if not for liberty, for largess in the way of trading rights and so forth. How, between them, they brought the country to ruin, we shall see. "The waters of the Nile," as an emblem of Egypt's power, recall Isaiah's phrase: "The waters of Shiloah, that so softly," i.e. the House of David.<sup>2</sup> Calamity has dogged the steps of these party politicians; yet in vain. The only fear of which they are innocent, is the fear of Jahveh. The only yoke

<sup>1</sup> See Introduction to chap. xxv.

<sup>2</sup> See Isa. viii. 6.

they will not bear, is the yoke that had made them free. "They will not serve ;" The A.V. alters this to : I will not transgress. But it is on no momentary fit of repentance, but on their resolute determination to resist, that the prophet bases his scathing indictment.

## III

Verse 21. Yet I had planted thee a noble vine,  
Wholly a good stock.  
How art thou then turned to bitterness,  
A degenerate vine !

Verse 22. For, though thou wash thee with nitre  
And take thee much lye,  
Thy transgression is ingrained before me,  
Saith Jahveh, thy Lord.

Verse 23. How canst thou say, I am not defiled  
With Baal-worship ?  
See thy way in the valley ;  
Know what thou hast done.

This is no new thing. The tendency to idolatry is so deep-rooted as to be desperate. Old habit has become second nature. Instead of the sweet grapes gathered in the wilderness, Jahveh finds bitter clusters in His own vineyard. There is indeed no remedy. No chemicals, however powerful, mineral or vegetable, can efface the stain. The proof of their hopeless condition is that they do not realize the change that has passed over them. Yet in the valley of Hinnom, under the city walls, they sacrifice their children to Baal.<sup>1</sup>

## IV

Verse 23b. Thou art a swift young camel,  
Doubling on her track ;

Verse 24. An heifer run wild in the desert  
In the heat of her passion.

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<sup>1</sup> See on chaps. vii-x.

She snuffeth the breeze ; in the pairing season,  
 Who can restrain her ?  
 None that seek her need weary themselves ;  
 In her month they shall find her.

Verse 25. Refrain thy foot from being unshod.  
 And thy throat from thirst.  
 But thou said'st ; " No hope, no ;  
 For I have loved strangers."

In a figure, almost brutal in its boldness, the people are made to see themselves. The idea is not merely that of Israel's zeal in following false gods ; but of the vehemence with which they break away from Jahveh. Even domestic animals are shy to the point of wildness during gestation. Then, the contrast is pointed out between the strength of passion and the prostration which ensues : " In her month (i.e. the time of parturition) they shall find her."

## v

Verse 26. As a thief is ashamed when he is caught,  
 So is the House of Israel ;

Verse 27. Saying to a tree, My father ; and to a stone,  
 Thou hast borne me.

For they have turned on Me the back,  
 And not the face ;  
 Yet in the time of trouble they say :  
 Up, and save us !

Verse 28. And where are those thy gods  
 Whom thou madest for thyself ?  
 Let them up, if they can save thee !  
 In the time of thy trouble.

The people are not, of course, without feeling. Even a thief is ashamed when he is caught. And yet how shamelessly, in time of trouble, they return and fawn on Him whom they have denied.

## VI

Verse 29. Why do ye contend with Me ?  
 Ye all have done wickedly ;  
 And ye have rebelled against Me.  
 It is the oracle of Jahveh.

Verse 30. In vain have I smitten your children,  
 They receive not correction.  
 The sword hath devoured your prophets,  
 As a lion that layeth waste.

Verse 31. Have I been as a wilderness to Israel,  
 A land of darkness ?  
 Why say they : We are broken loose,  
 We come not to Thee ?

The tables are turned in the strangest way. Jahveh is put on the defensive, and prosecuted by the people for an alleged breach of contract. Such trifling is intolerable. Note the pathetic appeal of verse 31.

## VII

Verse 32. Doth a maid forget her ornaments,  
 A bride her attire ?  
 Yet my people have forgotten Me,  
 Days without number.

Verse 33. Why trimmest thou thy ways  
 To seek after love ?  
 And thus, also, thou hast done evil,  
 Defiling thy ways.

Verse 34. Also on thy skirts is found  
 The blood of innocent ones.  
 I have not found it in the breach.  
 Nay, upon all these !

Jahveh speaks to the people as a lover, speaking "to their heart." But it is all in vain. Their energies are turned into quite other channels ; they seek after other love. Religious apostasy meant the dissolution of the social bond—violence, and the perversion of

justice. Accordingly, He confronts them with evidence of their guilt (verse 34). The plea of self-defence, allowed by the law (*see Exod. xxiii, 3*), could scarcely be urged in extenuation of judicial murders, the slaughter of these innocent ones. "Upon all these"; so he points them to "the skirts" already mentioned, i.e. the grassy slopes and fertile valleys that gathered round the land like the folds of a garment, now stained with blood.

## VIII

Verse 35. Yet thou sayest: I am absolved,

Surely His anger is turned from me.

Behold, I will enter into judgment with thee

Who sayest, I have not sinned.

Verse 36. Why glidest thou ever away,

Changing thy beat?

Thou shalt be ashamed of Egypt also,

As thou wert of Asshur.

Verse 37. Thou shalt go forth from them also,

Hands on thy head.

For Jahveh hath rejected whom thou trustest;

And thou shalt not prosper with them.

The severity of a Judge mingles with the wounded pride of a lover, as he pronounces sentence on them. Israel shall experience at the hands of others what she has herself inflicted on Jahveh.

Right through this chapter, there runs a broad and simple contrast, physical in its basis but capable of easy transference to the spiritual sphere—a contrast between "the wilderness" and Karmel (verse 7). From the Red Sea, northward to the roots of Lebanon, there runs a deep depression. In its upper reaches, known as the Ghor, it forms the channel of the Jordan; midway, as the Arabah, it forms the bed of the Salt Sea; while toward the south, as the wilderness of

Zin, it opens out to a breadth of from five to ten miles, "its surface littered with gravel and blown sand, often piled up in great dunes."<sup>1</sup> The prophet's youth was spent on the verge of the Arabah, and with a few rapid strokes he conveys to us here the impression it had burned in on his soul. It is a land of deep drifts and narrow gorges, with few springs or permanent streams; where the atmospheric effects, due to the pure air, are peculiarly strong. Such shade does not so much rest the eye, as oppress the heart, suggesting the evil that lurks within ("a land of mirk darkness"). It is a land with no homesteads or towns, and none of the great trade routes that run along the coast. It is true that in the desert there is pasture for flocks, and fuel for camp fires, and that from time to time, after winter rains, "drifts and gorges become thundering cataracts, round which there springs up a carpet of fresh green, all the more lovely from the contrast with the surrounding barrenness."<sup>2</sup> But the showers pass, and the short-lived spring yields to the arid, pulseless heat of summer. In this way the desert becomes, from another point of view, a still more impressive symbol, suggestive of disappointed hopes and efforts that end in despair (verse 35). The effect of this Vision of Death on the prophet's mind was deepened by the force of contrast. Behind it lay Karmel, the fruitful land. The word Karmel means a garden. Often it is used as a descriptive term; thus, in chap. xlviii Moab is Karmel (verse 33). But here the local reference is unmistakable. The mind passes instinctively from the abstract idea to the spot which most impressively illustrates it—the great hill, "cutting across the sea board of Palestine, like a hand reached out to

<sup>1</sup> Hull's *Desert of Sinai*.

<sup>2</sup> Prof. Palmer.

catch the rains, and scatter them over the plain below."<sup>1</sup> Between these two, the Wilderness and Karmel, Jahveh sets Himself, to plead with His people : Have I been a wilderness to you ? (verse 31).

The whole passage is characteristic of our prophet. He makes no attempt to demonstrate the existence of God ; but, taking his stand on the broad ground of experience, makes this magnificent appeal to the conscience and heart of his people. Jahveh reveals Himself in action, in those great miraculous interpositions on which the whole Covenant history is based. And Judgment, when it follows sin, records itself, with almost automatic precision, in the altered political and social conditions. While the people followed Jahveh, the wilderness blossomed like a rose ; when they forsook Him, even Karmel withered and became a desert. For our prophet the science of Economics is very simple. The tide of material prosperity ebbs and flows in obedience to celestial laws. While Faith orbits to her fullness, dominating the life of a people, the tide rises steadily ; when she wanes, it as surely recedes.

If we can interpret the prophet's symbol, the appeal, here made to Israel, is valid for ourselves to-day. It is impossible to eliminate the Wilderness from life ; it is by conflict, stern and often lonely, that men grow strong. Yet, all through, there is a kindly Providence guiding our steps, scattering blessings on our way. If the results of life are disappointingly poor, we have ourselves to blame. The Eclipse of Faith is temporary ; the great celestial forces work on. " Thus saith Jahveh : Have I been a wilderness unto you ? "

Ch. ii. 1-5. The first five verses of chap. iii properly belong to chap. ii. The same figure of the unfaithful

<sup>1</sup> G. A. Smith's *Hist. Geography*.

wife is continued here ; though the point of view is somewhat altered, and the situation more advanced. The following rendering of these verses may be offered :

## I

Verse 1. If a man put away his wife,  
     And she go from him ;  
     If she become another man's wife,  
         Shall she return to him ?  
     Were there not utter defilement  
         In such a land ?  
     And thou hast played the harlot with many lovers—  
         And wilt return to Me ?

## II

Verse 2. Lift up thine eyes to the bare heights ;  
     Where hast thou not been lien with ?  
     Thou satest waiting for them by the way,  
         Like the marauding Arab,  
     And hast defiled the land with thy harlotry,  
         And by thy wickedness.  
 Verse 3. So the showers were withheld, and the latter rain—  
     It hath not been.

## III

And the front of an harlot was thine,  
     Thou refused'st to be ashamed.  
 Verse 4. Is it not a new thing, that thou callest to Me,  
         “ The Friend of my youth ! ”  
 Verse 5. Will Jahveh retain anger for ever ?  
     Will He keep it continually ? ”  
     Behold, thou hast said and done it—  
         Done evil with thy might.

Having impleaded the nation as a faithless wife, Jahveh here raises, in abstract and purely legal form, the question of their return. But the question has already been settled on the highest authority;<sup>1</sup> and with

<sup>1</sup> Deut. xxiv, 1-4.

a brief summary of this former judgment, He proceeds to enforce it. Certainly no excuse could be urged in Judah's case. She had sinned openly, and in the light of day. She had built altars to Baal on hill tops, as if to flaunt her infidelity in the sight of heaven. Watchful and wary, like the Arab of the Desert who lies in wait for the caravan he means to despoil, she had intrigued with the nations and consummated those political alliances by which she renounced her allegiance to Jahveh. Nor had she done this unwarned. With a merciful severity He had chastened her, withholding the showers that soften the earth, and the rains that swell the fruit ; but in vain. Nor could it be urged in her defence that on occasion she could dissemble well. The reference in verse 4 is no doubt to the Deuteronomic Reformation, the shallowness, if not the hollowness, of which must very soon have become apparent to the prophet. A few conventional phrases, legislation as worthless as the parchment on which it was inscribed, were enough in Judah's eyes to efface the memory of generations of wrongdoing. Meantime, with fair words on her lips, her ways were fierce and foul as ever : Thou doest evil with thy might.

## CRITICAL NOTES ON CHAPS. II. 1-III. 2.

It is impossible to record here, still less to justify, the numerous trifling alterations and omissions made in restoring the poetic form. Students must be referred to Duhm's work. I mention those only which are of importance, and where I differ from him.

Ch. ii. verse 14a. The original requires the insertion of an accented syllable to complete the line ("Now"). It may be borrowed from verse 18, where it is redundant. The fourth line of the verse is recovered from verse 15.

Verse 15. "Shaven Thy head." By easy transposition of letters, from 'arah = To be bare. Cf. Ta'ar = a razor. See Driver's note.

Verse 17. The closing phrase ("At the time when He led them," etc.) is omitted. It is really a variant of verse 18a; and is omitted in LXX.

Verse 19a. "Thy backsliding shall reprove thee" (A.V.) is omitted as exegetical of the previous (ambiguous) phrase. See Duhm.

Verse 19b. The close of the verse ("That it is an evil thing," etc., etc.) is omitted as an interpolation. It is a favourite phrase with the Editors; borrowed here from verse 17; cf. iv. 18. The text is uncertain, as the LXX proves.

Verse 20b. Omit the phrase: "For upon every high hill," etc. Not content with this earlier amplification of the text, the LXX adds: *πορευομαι*. "A wanton harlot, thou!" The verb "to wanton" expresses a gesture either of pride (Bending back; of Isa. lxiii, 1) or of lust (Bending over; so here, and cf. Isa. li, 14). For another, transitive, use of the verb ("to tilt"), cf. chap. xlviii, 12.

Verse 21. "To bitterness." For the present almost impossible text, I propose to read: Lim'rôrôth Gěphěn; relying on Deut. xxxii, 32; and on the LXX rendering of the phrase: *εἰς πικριάν*.

Verse 23. Insert: 'Att (Thou), which has been merged in previous word; and point: Darkâh (Her way).

Verse 24. The combination of "the swift young camel" (fem.) with the "wild ass" (masc.) creates gramma

tical confusion. Read: Pārāh; and alter suffixes accordingly; also, the accents.

Verse 28. The close of the verse, which is in prose, is omitted, as a later addition.

Verse 29. The verse is restored in agreement with the LXX.

Verse 31. In the M.T., the verse begins: O generation, see ye the Word of Jahveh. The LXX endeavours, but without much success, to deal with what is evidently a late insertion.

Verse 33b. We adopt the reading suggested by the LXX. See note in Streane's Double Text.

Verse 35. "Why glidest thou away." Duhm and Giesebrécht, following the LXX, render: "Why dost thou lightly" (as if from *zalal*). But see Driver's note. The verb 'azal is used of streams that fail the traveller (Job xiv, 11), and of failing food or strength (1 Sam. ix, 7; Deut. xxxii, 36). Thus a new turn is given to the imagery of the Desert. See Introduction to the chapter.

Ch. iii. verses 1-5.

Verse 1. Duhm, Giesebrécht and others read: "That woman," for: "that land." Yet, in favour of the present text, is the undoubted reference to Deut. xxiv, 4.

Verse 3. Duhm and Erbt prefer to follow the LXX, and read: "And thy many friends were a snare to thee," instead of: And the showers were withheld. But with chap. xiv before us, the fact of such recurrent droughts in Josiah's day is made certain.

Verse 4. It is probably better to omit the phrase: My Father—an anticipation, here, of verse 19. In verse 5a, a word has fallen out—probably, Jahvch. Duhm greatly improves the rhythm by reading the Hiph'il of the verb: Thou hast done evil. The change in the original is very slight.

## ISRAEL AND JUDAH

### CHAPTERS III, 6—IV, 2

**A** NEW section opens here dealing with the relations between Israel and Judah, and dating, like the former section, from the reign of Josiah.

[The question as to the unity and authorship of the section is somewhat difficult. Driver connects verse 19 with verse 5, and treats the intervening verses as a separate section, apparently accepting it as Jeremian throughout. Stade and Cornill also connect verse 19 with verse 5. They reject verses 17, 18 as post-exilic; and regard verses 6–16 as a displaced Jeremian oracle. But verse 16, which is negative, seems to require the positive statement of verse 17 as its supplement; in which case their analysis of the passage must be rejected. Duhm regards verses 12b, 13 as a Jeremian kernel, provided here with an editorial setting (6–12a). He connects verse 13 directly with verse 19. But there is very little to justify the special importance attached to verses 12b and 13, unless it be their poetic form. Erbt connects verses 4 and 5 with verses 19, 20; verses 11–13 with verses 22–25, regarding verses 6–10 and verse 21 as later insertions. On the whole, I am disposed to agree with Giesebricht, who connects verses 6–13 with verses 19–iv. 2; and, having excised verses 14–18, which are certainly post-exilic, regards the rest as an early oracle of our prophet. It is true that elsewhere Jeremiah uses the name Israel of the whole nation, whereas here it denotes the North as opposed to the South, Ephraim as contrasted with Judah. But the fact that the contrast is introduced, not by way of implication or parenthesis, but expressly and as the burden of the passage, may justify, as it certainly requires, the narrower connotation of the name. We notice that the North is divorced (verse 8), i.e. the bulk of the Ten Tribes are already gone into exile

when the prophet writes. The contrast instituted between North and South implies that things have not yet reached this stage with Judah (verse 9) ; and if so, the passage, as a whole, must be relieved of those verses (verses 14-18) which imply that Judah also is in exile. On the other hand, the condition of Israel, divorced and decimated, forms a fine background for the sympathetic description of their repentance and return as given in verses 19-iv, 2.]

To understand the attitude which the prophet here assumes towards Israel, we must briefly review the history of the nation. From an external point of view the reign of Solomon was splendid enough ; but, from another, inner point of view, it was just as sordid. Protracted wars, and the heavy duties levied to maintain public works had exhausted the people and alienated their affections from the throne. Jerusalem might be proud of a king who poured through her gates the treasures of every clime ; but, through the land, the people, as a whole, felt that they were being fleeced like sheep to feed a luxurious and dissolute court. Hence, at the first opportunity, when, on the death of Solomon, a young and inexperienced hand assumed the reins of government, they raised the standard of revolt. The secession of the Ten Tribes was a political and social movement ; perhaps the earliest attempt made, on a great scale, to assert the rights of man. As such we are assured it had the approval and sympathy not only of patriots but of prophets like Ahijah. But it entailed consequences which, if not foreseen, proved not less inevitable. To maintain her position as an independent kingdom, Israel threw herself into the arms of the heathen powers lying around. Then followed royal marriages with Tyre, commercial treaties with Syria, and a general absorption of foreign customs and ideas which left her practically a heathen country. Thus the movement, once deemed

not only hopeful but sacred, proved, like the French Revolution, disastrous in its actual results. It began as a political protest ; it ended in disavowal of the ancient Faith. We must remember that, within the historic period, i.e. after their settlement in Canaan, the Northern tribes were never really permeated by the ideals of Jahvehism, as these took root and developed in the South. Lying far apart and separated by natural barriers, they retained much of the old Nature worship inherited from their fathers. Here and there, now and then, a Gideon might arise to conjure with the mighty Name and galvanize the tribes into a semblance of unity. But the influence of such men did not survive themselves. To the bulk of the people the newer developments of Jahvehism were associated with Judah, and regarded as a political innovation threatening the independence of the North. Further, as their literature and history assure us, the temper of the North was lively, sensitive, artistic, readily responding to the kindly influences which played on them. They loved warmth and colour ; and were as naturally ritualistic in their worship as are the peasantry of the sunny South to-day. There was no break, no formal renunciation of Jahveh ; but rather a gradual decline into forms of worship which became more and more sensuous. The sin of Israel was instinctive, involuntary, almost unconscious ; largely a matter of environment. They were fickle, rather than false. The prophet calls them “ Turncoat Israel.”

With Judah it was otherwise. At an early period the kingdom was transferred from the North to the South. The Temple of Jahveh and the House of David stood side by side. Judah could never disown Jahveh ; but she could blend with His worship heathen elements, cruel and ghastly rites, such as shocked every

natural feeling. The temper of the capital was not gay and versatile as in the North, but gloomy, resolute, and treacherous.

One other point is brought out in this survey of the national history. For a century before the Fall of Judah, the Ten Tribes were expiating in exile their apostasy from Jahveh. That was a great object lesson, a demonstration on the Blackboard of History, an experiment in the Laboratory of Life, which should have burned conviction into any conscience that was not wholly seared. No doubt it had some effect. The Deuteronomic legislation was an attempt to avert such a fate from Judah, and, in our prophet, we have the representative of a little band who never swerved from their loyalty to Jahveh. But in the main Judah was unmoved. The people, misled by the false prophets, rejoiced that at last Jahveh had rejected their rival, and concluded that they might now safely presume on their privileged position as the Covenant Folk.

Jeremiah, by birth, belonged to the North. He spent a long lifetime in the capital, but he was never at home there. In reviewing their history, he judges on the whole favourably of Israel, holding them as at least less guilty than Judah. "The Turncoat Israel has justified herself in comparison with the Treacherous Judah."

There always have been these two types of sinners. Our Lord found them side by side ; and in the judgment He passed on the Pharisees in His own day, He confirmed that of the prophet as recorded here. "The publicans and harlots shall go into the Kingdom of Heaven before you." It is so still. It is easy to pass wholesale condemnation on the masses in our great cities and country districts, who, in good sooth, are pagan enough in character and conduct. But how much is it, with

them as with Israel, a question of environment? To them one preaches the Gospel with a certain confidence that it is the right word in the right place. It is different with those who unite a profession of the Christian faith with the rankest vices, the pride and selfishness, of a pagan age. On one of the few occasions when John Wesley preached to a courtly audience, he chose Repentance as his theme, and flung denunciations right and left. At the close, one of his hearers remonstrated with him: "That sermon should have been preached in Newgate!" "On the contrary," was his reply, "had I been preaching there, I should have chosen as my text, Behold the Lamb of God."

On the ground of the favourable judgment passed on Israel the prophet is commissioned to preach forgiveness to the North. It must of course be understood that in making this appeal he does not, as Duhm puts it, talk "in die Luft," but addresses himself to these members of the Northern tribes who were left in the land. In this he follows the example of godly kings like Hezekiah.

Verse 12b. Turn again, Oh, turncoat Israel,  
Unto Me, saith Jahveh;  
I will not frown upon you,  
For I am merciful;

Verse 13. Only acknowledge thine iniquity,  
That thou hast rebelled 'gainst Me  
And hast scattered thy ways to strangers.  
And hast not hearkened to My voice.

But the problem is not so easily solved. John Baptist preached repentance, and lost his head; Jesus Christ came, revealing the Father, and the world's heart was won. What the people needed in Jeremiah's day was, not the urgency either of patriot or of prophet,

but some new and more spiritual conception of Jahveh. Jahveh Himself interposes (notice the emphasis of verse 19) to solve the problem not by a *tour-de-force*, but by the insight and patient sympathy which wins men to His side.

**Verse 19.** But I, I have said :

How put thee among the children,  
And give thee a choice land,  
A very goodly heritage ?

And I said, Thou shalt call Me, my Father !  
Nor turn away from Me.

**Verse 20.** Surely, as a wife playeth false with her husband,  
So hast thou played false with Me.

The phrase : “ To put among the children,” can hardly mean : How shall I establish thee with children !<sup>1</sup> nor even : How shall I restore thee, a faithless wife, to thy place and influence among the children, i.e. as mistress of the house ? It is simply : How shall I treat thee, a faithless servant, as if thou wert a child ?<sup>2</sup> As if teaching a child to babble, Jahveh puts into the mouth of the people the words they shall speak. But, of course, it is the spirit of adoption, not any phraseology, however seemly and sacred, that avails. In verse 20, the figure shifts from that of the children to that of the wife. The nation, as individuals, were Jahveh’s apostate children ; as a community, His faithless wife. His appeal is not in vain. Deep answers to deep ; the penitence of the people to the pity in the heart of God. Affliction has done its work. They recognize the vanity of their efforts, of the energy put forth in the worship of idols—mere “ tumult on the mountains.” The Baal they had worshipped so ardently, is now no better in their eyes than a Bosheth,

<sup>1</sup> As Cheyne suggests.

<sup>2</sup> Compare Prov. xvii, 2.

a shameful thing that has consumed their substance and clothed them with confusion.

Verse 21. A voice is heard on the bare heights,

Weeping and supplication ;

For they have perverted their ways, forgotten  
Jahveh, their God.

Verse 22. Return, ye apostate children,

I will heal your apostasy.

Behold, we come unto thee,  
For Thou art our God !

Verse 23. Surely in vain, from the hills,

Is the tumult of the mountains ;

Surely in Jahveh, our God,  
Is the salvation of Israel.

Verse 24. And the Shameful One hath devoured, from our  
youth,

The labours of our fathers.

We lay us down in our shame, and cover us  
With our confusion.

The passage is exceedingly interesting, as giving us insight into the wider outlook with which the prophet began his ministry—the sanguine and optimistic temper of his youth. It seemed to him still possible, by an earnest appeal, not only to rouse Judah but to reclaim Israel. As a Benjaminite, a member of the Northern kingdom, it lay near his heart to make this early appeal, not to Jerusalem, but to the whole nation in its ideal unity. All too soon his horizon narrowed. Step by step he was driven in upon himself. There came a time when, instead of hoping to save Israel, he despaired of saving Judah ; when he had to fight hard for his own spiritual life. In this, no doubt, his experience was that of all enthusiasts. Vast is the egoism of youth ! In the morning of life we project our shadow easily across the globe, conscious only of power and will ; not yet of the limitations which they

bring with them. We too have to learn to measure our steps, and to moderate our pace ; and often it happens that, because we have failed to do all, we despair of doing anything. What is unique in the prophet's experience is, that the wider outlook of his early days returns to him at the close of life. We shall hear him, amid the siege of Jerusalem, in the words of consolation which he addresses to the people, include the North once more, aiming, not by passionate appeal as in his youth, but in reliance on the infinitely patient and therefore omnipotent promises of God, at a United Israel. And rightly so. He who can do anything, can do everything. He who will save Judah must save Israel as well.

Chap. iii, 14-18. There still remains for consideration, the short oracle, verses 14-18. It is full of life and force, emanating from the very heart of the Covenant People ; but it has no marks of Jeremian authorship. The Ark is lost ; the House of David is no more ; Judah, sharing in Israel's sin, shares her punishment, and has gone into captivity. All this seems hopeless enough ; but the very extremity of the situation is the one hopeful element in it. The Fall of Judah has broken down the wall of pride and imagined superiority which separated her from her sister. If we might put the case in modern phraseology, the Disestablishment of the Church has opened the way to the Reunion of Christendom ! And, no doubt, in the utter absence of earthly leaders, the people were more willing to wait on God.

First of all, there comes the call to Repentance—the condition of all Restoration : Turn ye. With eager hand Jahveh is seen, gathering His outcasts, sifting them like grains of wheat, and gathering them

into His granary: I will bring you to Zion. The "family," i.e. tribe or clan, is a larger unit than the city, and therefore yields larger results: "One of a city, and two of a family." The roots of the national apostasy lay deep in political conditions. Upstart rulers, like Jeroboam, naturally favoured religious innovations; and weak kings, like Zechariah, had followed suit. Hence the importance of the promise Jahveh gives: "I will give you shepherds, i.e. rulers, after My heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and judgment." Feeding in such pastures the little flock soon breaks bounds. The primal blessing is reaffirmed: "Ye shall multiply and increase."<sup>1</sup> Even loss becomes gain, as in the case of the Ark. The later history of the Ark is obscure. From Pss. xxiv and lxviii, we learn that it had existed in comparatively recent times. According to 2 Chron. xxxv, 3, it was an object of veneration even in Josiah's days. Now it is gone, and with it the Temple. In this connexion, a special interest attaches to verse 17: "At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of Jahveh, and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, because of the name of Jahveh." The meaning is not, that one symbol shall be replaced by another more stable and striking than itself, e.g. the Ark by the city; but rather that all which no material symbol could ever express shall be realized in a new spiritual society, the community of the redeemed. The impersonation of Jahveh's Name, as well as this gathering of the nations to Jerusalem, not for war but for worship, are marks of a late and post-exilic age.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Genesis i, 28.

## THE SCYTHIAN INVASION

### CHAPTERS III—VI

REFERENCE has already been made to an event which marked the prophet's youth, and powerfully affected him throughout life, the Scythian Invasion. Classical writers, such as Homer and Aeschylus, mention the Scythians; but it is to Herodotus we are indebted for what we know of their movements at this time. According to him, their early home lay to the north-east of the Caspian Sea, in a barren region the air of which was darkened by a perpetual fall of snow. They lived in waggons, fed on mares' milk, and wore coats and leggings of skin. They blinded their slaves, and were noted for their use of the bow. Driven by the love of change, they moved southwards toward the Black Sea, where so many great rivers pour their waters across the fertile plain. The legend of a golden plough and yoke that fell from heaven indicates that, at an early period, they had passed from a simple nomadic stage of civilization to the practice of agriculture. Moving still further South, they drove the Cimmerians before them into Asia Minor, in hot haste maintaining the pursuit; but, mistaking their way, as Herodotus thinks, they came out far to the East. They next overran the Assyrian Empire; checked the advance of Media for a generation; and poured along the sea-board of Palestine, till they reached Egypt. There

they were met with peaceful weapons,<sup>1</sup> and persuaded to turn their horses' heads to the North. On their homeward way they spoiled the Temple of Venus at Ascalon, indulging in excesses the physical, and probably quite natural, results of which are attributed by the historian to the vengeance of the gods. The whole incident remains obscure at several points, but it is certain that about this time (circa 626 B.C.) Palestine suffered heavily from such a robber raid. Zephaniah sketches their advance in lively terms. Ezekiel borrows from it the colours in which he pourtrays his vision of the last Judgment. Bethshan, north of Gilboa, and in the very heart of Palestine, was known to the Greeks as Scythopolis. And here, from Jeremiah, we learn how great was the panic they inspired and the devastation they wrought throughout Syria.

In chap. iv we have five poems which refer to this Scythian invasion ; probably the earliest effort of the prophet's genius. They throb with passionate emotion, and that intense sympathy with his native land which drew him out of his privacy and constituted for him, as we have seen in chap. i, the Divine call to his ministry. The hand of later Editors has been at work here, marring the poetic form of these priceless fragments, and introducing elements of thought which were quite certainly alien to the prophet at this time. For example, the whole scenery of these early Syrian poems proves that they were written by the prophet while he was in Anathoth, before his removal to the capital. It is the desolation of the country, rather than the sin of the city, that burdens his heart and is reflected by them. Yet they are introduced by a brief oracle (verses 3-5) which refers directly to the capital, and therefore belongs to a later period ; while repeated

<sup>1</sup> δώροισί τε καὶ λιτήσι.

attempts are made to keep Jerusalem to the front (verses 14, 16, 29). Again, there is a disposition to appeal from the narrow public with which the prophet was as yet familiar, to the gentile nations (e.g. verse 16). Such an appeal was natural enough after the Fall of Jerusalem, when the one way in which Judah could make history was by influencing other nations more powerful and progressive than herself. Jeremiah had no such temptation to appeal "to the gallery." During a great crisis in history of the nation, his one aim was to rouse the conscience of his own countrymen. And again, there is a tendency here—it is characteristic of these later Editors, and our own age, more than any other, can sympathize with it—to utilize a great Teacher like our prophet, for purposes of edification. As if he had not clearly enough pointed the moral, his verse is burdened, often broken, by a mass of homiletic matter which, however excellent, blunts the edge of his appeal and often obscures his meaning (verses 9, 10, 14, 18, 22). He himself is always direct and strenuous. If we grasp these points and are prepared, with perfect reverence but fearlessly, to apply common-sense to the interpretation of Scripture, even the simplest reader will be able to appreciate and justify many of the omissions and emendations which are necessary to restore the text.

## I

Verse 5b. Blow ye the trumpet in the land,  
Cry aloud !  
Gather yourselves together, and let us enter  
Into the strong cities.

Verse 6. Lift up a standard towards Zion,  
Pack up ! stay not.  
For calamity is coming from the North,  
And utter ruin.

Verse 7. The lion hath gone up from his lair,  
Destroying the nations.  
He hath roused him, and gone up from his place,  
To lay waste the land.

Verse 8. For this, gird you with sack-cloth,  
Weep ye, and howl.  
For there is no turning away from us  
Of Jahveh's fierce anger.

We are plunged at once into a scene of widespread panic. The trumpet peals ; the peasantry, rescuing what they can of personal property, betake themselves to the capital ; here and there a banner, uplifted, serves to rally the fugitives, and lead them to their place of safety. The enemy is compared to a lion coming up from the Jungle of the Jordan. The figure is conventional ; nearer acquaintance with the foe makes the prophet's language much more vivid and realistic. In verse 6, instead of " For I am bringing calamity from the North," <sup>1</sup> we must restore the text as above. It is not Jahveh, but the prophet, who speaks throughout.

## II

Verse 11. A wind from the hot heights in the desert.  
Toward the daughter of my people ;

Verse 12. Not to sift, nor yet to cleanse ;  
A full wind, it bloweth up.

Verse 13. Behold, he cometh up like storm clouds.  
His chariots are like a whirlwind.  
Swift as an eagle are his horses.  
Alas for us, we are undone.

Verse 15. Hearken ! one publisheth from Dan,  
Proclaiming disaster ;  
From Mount Ephraim—

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Verse. 16. Behold, watchmen are coming  
From a far country ;

<sup>1</sup> So in the A.V.

Verse 17. Like keepers of a field, are they  
Against her round about.

Here the figure for Judgment is the wind—not the light breeze that sifts the farmer's corn, but the searching hot wind that withers his crops. On the horizon, the dust raised by the Scythian horses hangs like a storm cloud ; they sweep the land as into the vortex of a whirlwind ; their advance is swifter than an eagle's flight. From Dan comes the rumble of their chariot wheels, like the muttering of distant thunder. The "disaster proclaimed" (verse 15) is the havoc wrought by the storm.<sup>1</sup> And now (verse 17) they seem to encircle the land, holding it in their grip ; camping here and there, on hill sides, like vineyard keepers. The verse is based on Isaiah i, 8. The reference ("Against her, round about") is not, as the reader of the present text might imagine, to Jerusalem, but to the Daughter of my People (see verse 11) i.e., the country folk. The second half of verse 15 has disappeared ; the scribe being much more anxious to insert his own appeal to the nations, than to preserve the prophet's text. Duhm's conjecture ("From Mount Ephraim they give warning, Crying with full voice") is plausible.

## III

Verse 19. My bowels, my bowels, I am pained  
Within my heart.

My heart moaneth unto me ;  
I keep not silence.

For I have heard the sound of the trumpet,  
The alarm of war.

Verse 20. "Ruin upon ruin," is the cry ;  
For the whole land is desolate.

Suddenly is my tent laid desolate ;  
In a moment, my curtains.

Verse 21. How long shall I see the standard, and hear  
The sound of the trumpet !

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Hab. iii, 7, where the same word, 'Aven, is used, also of a storm.

The lyric is one long cry of agony. The prophet is pained "within his heart" (Lit. "The walls of his heart"). The storm at length has broken. The tumult of battle, ruin upon ruin, is on every side.

## IV

**Verse 23.** I beheld the land, and lo !

It was without form and void ;

And the heavens, and there was no light there.

**Verse 24.** I beheld the mountains, and lo !

(They were) trembling.

And all the hills swayed themselves lightly.

**Verse 25.** I beheld (the earth), and lo !

There was no man there

And all the birds of heaven were fled (away).<sup>1</sup>

**Verse 26.** I beheld the fruitful land, and lo !

(It was) a desert.

And all the cities were razed 'fore Jahveh's face.

Here are the effects of the storm on Nature ; desolation of the landscape. The measure changes. We have still a quartett ; but the third line is abbreviated, and consists of only two beats, or accented syllables. Or, the third and fourth lines may be read, as above, in one long line of four accented syllables. A slight transposition in verse 26 is required to restore the rhythm ; also, the insertion, twice, of the personal pronoun ; of "the earth," in verse 25a ; and "away" in verse 25b. The passage is one of great descriptive power. It is a "Vision of the Last Man." The prophet sees himself "surviving the judgment he predicts, and treading the ashes of an extinct world."<sup>2</sup> All the old landmarks have been swept away, so that the land seems formless and

<sup>1</sup> Read Infin. Absolute of the verb.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. A. B. Davidson.

void. To his dizzy brain, the very mountains seem to tremble. On the hot, heavy air not a bird spreads the wing. The earth, once blessed, withers under Jahveh's curse. Chaos returns again.

## v

Verse 29. From the noise of the horse-man and bow-man  
The whole land is in flight.

They are gone into the woods, and 'mong the rocks  
They hide themselves.  
All the cities are forsaken,  
Without inhabitant.

Verse 30. And thou, what wilt thou do ?

Though thou clothe thee in silk,  
Though thou prick thine eyes with pigment,  
In vain shalt thou beautify thyself.  
Thy lovers reject thee,  
They seek thy life.

Verse 31. For I have heard the voice of one in travail,  
The cry of one bringing forth her first-born.  
Hearken, the Daughter of Zion is in labour ;  
She spreadeth forth her hands.

Alas for me, yea, weary  
Is my soul because of murderers.

Here are the effects of the judgment on man ; dissolution of social life. Even the fenced cities are no longer safe. The wretched inhabitants flee to the woods and burrow like beasts of the earth. Jerusalem alone remains. But what now of the splendour and state she had affected ? These were no better than the gaudy attire in which a harlot tricks herself out ; and as vain. The great Powers to which she had paid such servile court, her lovers, reject her, or seek her only to take her life. Her hour of travail has come.

In verse 30 the text is corrupt. The word "Desolate" (Shādūd) is quite unconstruable, and is omitted

in the LXX.<sup>1</sup> The phrase: “Though thou deck thyself with golden ornaments,” is a later addition borrowed from Ezekiel xvi, 13.

There are three more of these Syrian poems that have been preserved in the following chapters, embedded in what is, in the main, an address to the capital. From their contents, we judge that they belong to a slightly later period than those we have yet examined, and were written by the prophet after his removal from Anathoth to Jerusalem. We give them in the order in which they occur in the text.

Ch. v. verse 15. Behold, there cometh against you

A nation from afar;

A nation whose speech thou knowest not.

They are all mighty men.

Verse 17. They shall eat up thy corn and thy bread,

Thy flocks and thy herds.

They shall break down thy strong cities,

Wherein thou trustest.

[Unimportant in itself, this little poem is interesting as showing how easily the text, when misunderstood or misapplied, became corrupt. By some copyists it was taken as a reference, not to the Scythians, the memory of whom had been effaced by later and heavier calamities, but to the Chaldeans, and was amended, or at least strengthened, to suit this application. In our present text it reads thus: “I am bringing on you a nation from afar; it is a mighty nation, it is an ancient nation, whose speech thou knowest not, neither understandest thou what they say.” The description here given, excellent if understood of the Chaldeans, the “First of Empires,” is wholly inapplicable to the Scythians, who were now, for the first time, appearing on the stage of history. The phrase (A.V.) “Thy bread, which thy sons and daughters should have eaten,” is inadmissible. If retained, it must be rendered: They shall eat up thy corn and thy bread; they

<sup>1</sup> In certain MSS. it is rendered by *ταλαιπωρος*.

shall eat up thy sons and thy daughters. But it is doubtful whether even the hungry Scythians had a maw for such a meal. The introduction (A.V.) of "the vine and the fig tree" after "the flocks and herds" is, in the same way, a later interpolation. Whether the last lines may be retained, whether they are admissible in a description of the Scythian horde, may be doubtful. But in view of what we know of the capture of Ascalon, it can hardly be regarded as impossible.]

Ch. vi. verse 1. Pack up out of the midst of Jerusalem,  
Ye children of Benjamin !

Blow ye, blow the trumpet,  
And light your beacon fires.

For an evil impendeth from the North,  
Even utter ruin.

Verse 2. Behold, a pleasant meadow-land  
Is the High-place of the Daughter of Zion.

Verse 3. The shepherds come with their flocks,  
They pitch their tents.

They pasture, every one in his own quarter,  
Encircling her round-about.

Verse 4. Proclaim ye war against her.  
Up ye, at noon !

Alas for us, for the day declineth ;  
The shadows are drawn out.

Verse 5. Up, then, let us ascend by night  
And destroy her palaces.

We have here one of the most graphic of these Syrian poems. The approach of the enemy is sketched under the figure of shepherds, leading their flocks to pasture, and narrowing the circle in which they move about their centre. But this is no peaceful advance. Even the glare of noon-day does not deter them ; they push on amid the lengthening shadows of evening ; and make the night terrible with their shouting. Prof. G. A. Smith disputes the reference of this poem, on the ground that the Scythians,

if they took towns at all, "did not raise mound and ramp against them, but rushed them." He refers the passage to some hypothetical advance of the Egyptian army against Jerusalem, after the battle of Megiddo. But verse 6, on which this objection is based, is certainly not part of the poem—probably not Jeremian at all. And the figure of the shepherds is much more applicable to a wandering horde of Scythians, than to the regular army of Egypt. It is, of course, doubtful whether the Scythians ever regarded Jerusalem as their objective. What is certain is that the inhabitants of Jerusalem must have felt very uncomfortable, till they were well away beyond the Northern horizon.

[In verse 1 the cry, Blow ye, blow (Tikeu Takóa) has led, not unnaturally, to the introduction of Tekoah, and, withit, of Beth-Hakkerem. The interjection, "Behold" (verse 2), may be recovered from a slightly corrupt text (Read: הִנֵּה נְאֵת נְעֵנָה, Hinnah Nāveh M'cunnagah). "The High Place of the Daughter of Zion" is a rendering which follows the text of the LXX. In verse 3 the prepositions, "Unto her," "Against her," "About her," have been displaced. The first is a duplicate of the second, which, with the third, must originally have stood, as above, at the close of the verse.]

Ch. vi. verse 22. Behold, there cometh a nation  
 From the North country;  
 And a strong people, it is roused up  
 From the sides of the earth.  
 Verse 23. Grasping bow and weapons of war,  
 They are cruel.

Their noise is a roaring like the sea ;  
 They ride on horses.  
 They are arrayed as one man for battle,  
 Against the Daughter of Zion.  
 Verse 24. We have heard the rumour of them ;  
 Our hands hang down.

Panic has taken hold of us  
And pain as of a travailing woman.

Verse 25. Go not forth into the country,  
Walk not by the way  
For the enemy hath a sword.  
Terror take thee round about.

Verse 26. Oh, daughter of my people, gird thee with sack-cloth ;  
Roll thee in the dust,  
Make thee a mourning as of an only child,  
Even bitter lamentation.  
For, suddenly, he cometh,  
The destroyer, upon thee.

[The last of the Syrian poems has the usual Editorial Introduction, "Thus saith Jahveh." The phrase, "They have no mercy" (A.V. verse 23) is exegetical of the succeeding, less familiar, phrase, "A cruel nation." In verse 25, note the phrase (a favourite with the poet), "Terror take thee"; of which an explanation is offered in chap. 20, 1-6.]

CRITICAL NOTES ON CHAPS. IV-VI  
(THE SCYTHIAN SONGS).

Ch. iv. verses 11b-17.

Verse 12a. "A strong wind." A phrase is added ("From these"), which is, however, a variant of the previous word (Mē'elleh for Mālē').

Verse 14. Omit "Jerusalem."

The prophet, as we gather, is still in the open country. (Compare verse 16a). The interpolations in these verses are due to the editorial standpoint. See introduction to chapter.

Verses 19-21.

Verse 20. "I have heard." Omit: "My soul." The verb was pointed as if fem. participle, and so led to this insertion.

Verses 23-26.

Verse 23b. For: "To the heavens," read as above  
Substitute 'eth (accus. particle) for 'el (prep.), and insert it in verse 24c.

Verses 29-31.

Verse 29a. "The whole land" (LXX. Πασαχωρα). The M.T. reads: The whole city; another reference to Jerusalem.

Verse 29b. Omit the second verb (Climb up), as a duplicate of following word.

Verse 30. Shādūd, if retained, must be construed adverbially. (Cf. Job xii, 17 and xxii, 7; and see Ewald's Syntax § 3, 16). "Thy lovers"—the pronom. suffix, appears in the LXX.

Verse 31a. Read נַחֲלָה for נַחֲלָה (=anguish).

## WITHIN THE CITY

### CHAPTERS V—VI

THE invasion of the Scythians did more than momentarily impress the prophet's mind ; it permanently affected his career. The charm of the country was gone ; anything in the nature of prophetic activity was impossible, while the peasants were fleeing before the rough soldiery. About this time then, we must think of Jeremiah as leaving Anathoth for Jerusalem. Much, no doubt, was lost by the change. The quiet of a country life, the cultivation of his remarkable literary gifts, the chance to follow out, in an orderly and leisurely way, those lines of thought on which he had already entered ; all this was sacrificed. When he returned to Anathoth, some years later, it was as a different man, into a wholly different atmosphere—an atmosphere ruffled by controversy and heated by passion. On the other hand, how much was gained ; instead of an ideally simple life, a Titanic struggle against the Inevitable ; instead of graceful lyrics, passionate outbursts of thought and feeling which light up the Infinite depths in Man ; instead of the naïve unfolding of a single gentle soul, the reflexion, perplexing yet everywhere convincing, of an age, which, beyond most, was big with rapid and eventful changes. Into this life of storm and stress, of defeat and victory, we are now to follow him. Duhm suggests an instructive parallel between Luther on his arrival at Rome,

in 1510, and our prophet at this stage of his experience. " If they had given me a hundred thousand florins," says Luther, " I would not have missed seeing Rome." Jeremiah must have felt so, as he recalled his advent to Jerusalem. His soul was deeply stirred: disenchantment was the immediate result, but it was his introduction to Reality. In two strophes, each of seven couplets or double lines, he gives us first impressions of the Capital.

1 (Chap. v.)

Verse 1. Hurry through the streets of Jerusalem.  
 And see, now, and know.  
 Search diligently through her thoroughfares.  
 Whether ye can find a man.  
 Whether there be any one, doing justice  
 And seeking after truth.

Verse 2. For, though they swear by the life of Jahveh.  
 Their oath stands not.  
 Jahveh, hast thou an eye for falsehood,  
 And not for truth?  
 Thou hast smitten them, yet they smarted not.  
 They refused to receive correction.  
 They hardened their faces more than the rock;  
 They refused to repent.

He finds himself, like the Cynic philosopher, lighting a candle and going through the streets of the city, in search of a man! Ten righteous men might have saved Sodom, in Abraham's day. We have travelled far since then: and even one might save Jerusalem. But even Jahveh's all-searching eyes cannot find one. Profession of religion is everywhere; the practice of it, nowhere. Smitten and wasted by calamity, the mass of the people remain indifferent—hard as the rock, which the storm sweeps till it is bare of the thinnest coating of soil.

Verse 4. Then I, I said,  
 Surely, these are the rabble ;  
 They are senseless, for they know not  
 Jahveh's way.

Verse 5. I will get me to the great,  
 And will speak with them.  
 For they know Jahveh's ways,  
 The judgment of their God.

Nay, they have altogether broken the yoke,  
 And burst the bands.

Verse 6. Therefore, a lion out of the forest hath smitten  
 them,  
 A wolf of the steppe.  
 A leopard watches over their cities.  
 He that goeth out is torn.

At first the prophet is inclined to blame himself for failure. "These are the rabble"; they may urge, in their own defence, the plea of ignorance. They have never known the "sweet influences which bind the Pleiades." He turns to the leaders of the people, the educated and privileged classes; but here the result is worse. They know Jahveh's way, only to break His yoke and burst His bands. Such folly calls for the utmost severity. In words which recall a famous passage from the first canto of Dante's Inferno, the prophet summons against them the lion to tear, the wolf to waste, and the leopard to lie in wait at the gates of the city. The genius of the medieval poet betrays him into subtle analysis of character and recondite allusions which have no place on the page of prophecy. It is enough here, to see Nature's revolt against an unworthy lord.

Verses 7-9. Jahveh's goodness has been wholly abused. It has bred shameless wantonness in the people. Home-life reflects a debased religious ideal. The marriage bond is lightly broken; domestic virtues are scorned.

Verse 7. How shall I pardon thee for this ?  
 Thy children have forsaken me.  
 And though I made them swear, yet sware they  
 By gods that are not.

Verse 8. They did lewdly in the harlot's house.  
 Thronging together.  
 Itching stallions, they neigh  
 Each after his neighbour's wife.

[Probably here (verse 7) as in Malachi (chap. ii, 10) <sup>1</sup> the "oath" may convey a reference to the marriage-vow, the force of which they evaded by giving a religious sanction to their lust.]

Verses 10-13. The people are seen clinging, like the tendrils of a vine, to the walls of their city ; but with ruthless hand they are torn down and trailed in the dust. By terrible things in righteousness, Jahveh has taught them. But even Omnipotence cannot enforce the simplest moral truth upon unwilling minds. They do not deny the existence of Jahveh or dispute His claims ; they merely refuse to recognize His hand. Whatever happens they say, "It is not He." Their challenge is accepted. Just what they regard as incredible, shall actually take place. The text is in some confusion ; but it is possible to re-arrange it in a stanza whose close-knit force speaks for it, I think, as original and prophetic.

Verse 14a. Therefore, because they speak this word.

Verse 13b. Even so shall it happen to them.

Verse 14b. Behold, I will put my word  
 In thy mouth as fire ;

And this people shall be as fuel,  
 And it shall consume them,

Verse 13a. And the prophets shall be as wind ;  
 My word is not in them.

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<sup>1</sup> "The Covenant of thy youth."

In the last couplet there is an evident *double-entendre*. The prophets are empty as wind, for there is no true word in them. Yet, in their very emptiness, like the wind, they feed the passions of the people, and fan the flame that shall devour them. One thinks of Milton's famous lines :

The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed,  
But, swollen with wind and the rank mist they draw,  
Rot inwardly and foul contagion spread.

VerSES 18-31. We have next to consider a long prose passage, broken in style and calling for the critical knife. In the main, it is an appeal to the unwritten law, the Order of Nature. Nothing is more magnificent as a demonstration of Freedom and Force than the ocean ; and yet, with gentle sway and absolute effect, it is controlled by a rope of sand. A certain turgidity of style offends the ear in reading verse 22. It may be well, therefore, to give it here, in the briefer and more nervous form to which it can be restored : “ Will ye not fear me, saith Jahveh, or tremble before me, who have set the sand as a bound to the sea ? though the waves thereof roar, they shall not overpass it ; though they toss themselves proudly, they shall not prevail.” In contrast with this sweet reasonableness of what is mightiest in Nature, is set the waywardness and passionate unrest of the heart in man. These verses (21-22) have been rejected by distinguished critics such as Stade and Cornill on account of a certain affinity with other doubtful passages in this Book, and of a supposed dependence on the second Isaiah and the Book of Job. But Giesebrécht has pointed out the close connexion with what follows. They form the basis of the emphatic contrast suggested by verse 23. “ But this people hath a wayward and a rebellious heart.” Unless we

are prepared, with Duhm, to reject the whole passage, it seems not only fair but needful to retain them.

This appeal from man to Nature is followed by an inverse appeal from Nature to man. The greatest thing in Nature, after all, is not well-ordered force, but the evidence of Divine goodness which pervades it. Not force, but love, compels the heart. "Let us fear Jahveh, our God, who gives us showers, the early and the latter rain in its season, and reserveth for us the appointed weeks of harvest." The rainfall in Palestine continues during the whole winter from October to April in constant heavy showers.<sup>1</sup> Of particular importance to the husbandman, are the early rains<sup>2</sup> falling in October, preparing the land for the plough; and the latter rain<sup>3</sup> falling in March or April, swelling the ears of corn and enriching the harvest. Under this genial ministry of Nature, regular and progressive in its methods, abundant in its measure, and manifestly Divine in its source, the earth is softened and made fruitful; but the heart of man remains untouched. The result of this crass insensibility is recorded in a saying which, however we may judge of it from the scientific point of view, gives expression to that sense of the community between Nature and man which we have already noticed in our prophet: "Your sins have disturbed the order of Nature<sup>4</sup> and robbed you of good." Far other order holds, far other harvests ripen, where man has sway; craft and cruelty, sleek self-content of the prosperous worldling, coupled with indifference to the suffering of others—the widow and the orphan. "The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests enforce judgment in their interest; and my people loved to have it so."

<sup>1</sup> Geshim.

<sup>2</sup> Yoreh.

<sup>3</sup> Malkosh.

<sup>4</sup> Literally: Deflected these, i.e. the seasons.

Chap. vi. verses 6-7. Into the heart of the city, the prophet had carried with him the gracious impressions of his early life. Very different were the impressions made by his new surroundings.

Verse 6b. Alas, for the city of plunder,  
Wholly oppression within !

Verse 7. As a cistern cooleth its waters,  
So she cooleth her evil (heart).  
"Murder and Damnation" is the cry within her ;  
It is continually before me.

In the East, with its long dry summer, cisterns are a necessity of civilization. Hewn out of the rock, and covered over so as to be protected from the heat, they drain to themselves the surface water from ridge and roof. Never reached by the sun, or ruffled by a breeze, the water stagnates in its artificial bed, as cool in the heat of summer as in the depth of winter. If not kept clean, they breed disease and death—a persistent menace to the civilization which requires them. Cities are the cisterns of the moral world, drawing to themselves the floating population of a country side. Nothing is more startling than the self-absorption of city life. Conventionality lays its chilly hand on freedom, and we sink rapidly to the dull level of those about us. In spite of telegrams and a daily press, the city is strangely isolated. Strangers who come to London discover that nowhere else is public opinion so provincial. Londoners know little of what the rest of the world thinks ; they care less. Even divine judgments, earthquake and fire, reach them with muffled sounds, and waken scarcely an echo in the heart of the great city. The prophet stands amazed before the sluggish tide of tears and blood, that stifles so many a cry. Only one thought relieves the oppression of the scene. The city may refuse to hear God ; but God sees the

city. Her black depths, her dread secrets, are all "before Him."

Verses 8-14. Again a note of warning is sounded out. The Gentiles are summoned to complete the work of devastation. Like the dressers of a vineyard, they gather the rich clusters, and then, turning their hand upon the branches, glean them lest they miss a grape. The prophet himself is filled with the fury of Jahveh as a man with wine ; he can no longer restrain himself. Judgment is poured out on the guilty nation, and their land is handed over to others. Twice in these chapters the prophet strikes the note of final judgment (cf. verse 19). It has seemed to some impossible that, so early in his career, the prophet could contemplate such an issue. I do not suppose that, for some years after this, he regarded it as the inevitable. Still, for a century the Ten Tribes had been in exile, and a thoughtful mind could not well escape the suggestion that a similar penalty might follow the greater guilt of Judah. The influence of foreign customs had tainted the springs of national life. Judah had rejected Jahveh ; what should hinder Jahveh from rejecting Judah ? It is no literary artifice but rather an intuition, rapid and startling—the intuition of a great moral law, that lends crispness to his style, when he says : Like as ye have forsaken Me and served alien gods in your own land, so shall ye serve aliens in a land that is not yours.

In a passage full of fine analysis and dramatic power the prophet sums up the characteristics of his age.

(a) *It is a superficial age.*

Verse 14. They have healed the hurt of the Daughter of my people,  
With a light hand.

Saying, Peace, Peace,  
And Peace was not.

There have always been politicians who, on the eve of catastrophe, preached this agreeable doctrine of peace, and denounced as pessimistic and unpatriotic those who ventured to take a graver view of the situation. Gibbon tells how—in Imperial Rome—while the Gauls were thundering at her gates, Votes of Thanks were passed to her favourite generals, and medals struck in commemoration of imaginary victories. We ourselves know what it is gaily to fling down the gage of battle, never dreaming that it will be lifted, and to find ourselves ere we are aware in the heart of a mortal agony.

(b) *It is an inconsistent age.*

Verse 16. Stand in the way, and ask ye  
For the ancient paths.

Where is the good way, that ye may find  
Refreshment for your souls ?

Verse 17. I have set watchmen over you,  
Saying, Hearken ye,  
But ye said, We will not hearken  
To the sound of the trumpet.

Living upon their past, they had broken with all that was essential in it. They scorned as antiquated the good old simple ways, trodden by patriots and saints, and aspired to retain the protection of Jahveh while they invoked the patronage of heathen gods. Only the exile which scattered them among the nations, convinced them that it is vain to pour new wine into old bottles, and hope to preserve either. It lies near one's heart to point out how impossible it is for ourselves to discredit the Puritan Faith which made England an Imperial power, and hope to retain the Imperial ideals, so justly held in honour to-day.

(c) *It was a theatrical age.* They loved a show ; and cultivated the ritual, at the expense of the ethical in religion. Denying Jahveh, they crowded His courts, and burned costly incense on the altars of One, to whom a broken and contrite heart is the only pleasing sacrifice.

Verse 20. Wherefore do ye offer incense  
That is brought from Sheba,  
And calamus from a far country ?  
I will not accept it.  
Your burnt offerings and your sacrifices—  
There is no pleasure in them.

Finally, in a pathetic passage (verses 27-29), the prophet confesses disappointment, the apparent failure of his work. He describes himself under the figure of a trier or assayer of precious metals. A confusion of two words, even more alike in the original than they are in their English equivalents (Bāhōn a Trier, and Bāhūn a Tower), has led some copyists to introduce a reference to chap. i, 18, with its original definition of the prophet's work. ("I have made thee a tower and a fenced city.") In this way the meaning of verse 27 is wholly lost. Some slight acquaintance with metallurgy, as pursued by the ancients, is necessary if we are to understand the way in which the prophet works out his figure. Lead was used as a fusing agent on account of its power to take up silver, and form with it an alloy. This alloy or argentiferous lead, was then subjected to a second process known as cupellation. The cakes were melted on an open hearth and the lead, when thoroughly oxidized, was skimmed off as litharge. It often happened that the silver ore contained a large admixture of zinc or copper. In such cases, the baser metal would go, to some extent, with the silver into the alloy ; and, after cupellation, would be left on the hearth.

Then, as in our prophet's case, the result would be impure or reprobate silver.

In verse 28 the prophet receives the raw material with which he is to work—base metal, with scarcely an impregnation of silver. In verse 29 we see him at work. The bellows are scorched by the heat of the furnace; the lead is consumed—i.e. oxidized and skimmed from the molten mass. No effort has been spared; but the result is worthless. It is impossible to separate the people from their sin.

Verse 27. I have set thee among my people as a trier,  
That thou mayest try their ways.

Verse 28. They are all grievous revolters,  
Iron and brass.

Verse 29. The bellows are scorched in the fire,  
The lead is consumed.  
In vain is the smelting process;  
The wicked are not taken away.

Verse 30. Reprobate silver shall men call them,  
For Jahveh hath rejected them.

It is probable that with this sorrowful admission of failure the prophet ended his first issue of the Roll, which met with so ungracious a reception at royal hands.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See chap. xxxvi.

CRITICAL NOTES ON CHAPS. V-VI  
("WITHIN THE CITY")

Ch. v. verses 1-3.

Verse 1. Omit the closing words: That I may pardon them. They are borrowed from verse 7. The LXX add: Saith Jahveh.

Verse 2. "Their oath stands not." The M.T. reads: Surely (lākēn) they swear falsely. But the LXX. have found a negative in their text (οὐκ ἐν ψευδεσσιν). Lākēn is therefore (according to Duhm's excellent suggestion) to be read: Lō Kēn. The word "falsely" must originally have stood after the verb, and belongs to the next sentence.

Verses 4-6a.

Verse 4a. Read longer form of pronoun (cf. chap. ii, 19).

Verse 4b. "The judgment of their God" is borrowed from verse 5.

Verse 6a. The second verb ("shall spoil them") must be omitted. It is more suggestive of the ravages of an army than of the depredations of a wolf.

Verses 7-9 are very corrupt.

Verse 7. The phrase: I made them swear, must be transposed.

Verse 8. "Itching stallions." The word translated "Fed" must, I think, be derived from 'āzēn (a weapon). The word may have been used (like "yad," in Isa. lvii. 8) in an obscene sense of the membrum virile. In that case, the following words: Mashkîm Hayu, may have been proposed as more decent. Mashkîm must be derived from 'Ēshēk (Hiph. Part. of cognate verb; see Driver's note). The verb has thus been displaced, and must be recovered from the end of the verse ("They neigh").<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For the use of **תָּבָר** suggested above, cf. the phrase **אַיִלָּה תָּבָר** (Joshua xix. 34), of the conical peaks, fastigia vel vertices Taboris.

Verses 18-23. "Calling for the critical knife." I can only refer to Duhm's clever handling of the text, by which it is relieved of burdensome phrases. These, in turn, are arranged into a marginal note. They are all omitted in the LXX. The passage thus stands :

	Text.	Marginal Note.
Verse 26.	For among my people are found wicked men They set snares <sup>1</sup> They take men in pits.	(They lift cattle !)
Verse 27		(as in the text).
Verse 28.	Also they are fat They do not justice to the orphan Nor judge the Widow.	(They are gross !) (They devise wicked devices, That they may not prosper.)

The idea of verse 31 is that of *power abused*, rather than of lawful authority.

Ch. vi. verse 6a. An Editorial note meant as transition from the preceding Scythian song. Jahveh chimes in, and Himself becomes generalissimo of the Scythian host, directing the siege !

Verse 6b. "Alas!" reading Hōi. Instead of the verb : To be visited, read : Of plunder (Hap-pērēk), and compare Nahum, verse 31. See LXX (ὧ πόλις ψευδής ; Aquila, ἡ πόλις ἄδικος).

Verse 7. The figure is not that of a fountain welling up ; but of a cistern cooling. So the Greek translators (LXX, ὡς ψυχει λάκκος ὑδωρ).

The closing words of the verse ("sickness and wounds") are a comment on the text, borrowed from chap. x, 20.

Verses 16-17. The usual editorial introduction : Thus saith Jahveh.

For verse 16, read : Dērēk-tobh, and omit : And walk therein. Also omit : But they said, we will not walk therein. This has been suggested by verse 17.

Verse 17. Transpose . To the sound of the trumpet ; and insert : Saying.

<sup>1</sup> Reading : (ישׁוּ רַכּוֹשׁ) מַזְקָנִים הַצִּיבּוּ בְשַׁחַת אָנָשִׁים וְלִפְדוּ :

Verses 18-19 are editorial. Instead of: "And know, O Congregation," we must (if we retain it) read: Learn Knowledge. "What is among them," must be altered to: What is coming.

Verse 20. Omit the adjective "sweet," and transpose the phrase: *Lô L<sup>e</sup>Rāçôn*.

Verses 27-29.

Verse 27. Omit: That thou mayest know. If it had been original, it must have followed: "And try."

Verse 28. "Going about with slanders" is a (feeble) comment on the previous difficult phrase. So also: "They all of them deal corruptly."

Erbt proposes a different rendering of this passage; but not, as it seems to me, with great success. *מִבָּצָר* (in verse 27) may be altered to Piel Part. of *בָּצָר*. But then, it is redundant.

## THE KNELL OF DOOM

### CHAPTERS VII-X

WE now commence our study of those sections of the Book in which fragments from the prophet's lips have been preserved and woven together by Editorial hands. The section before us begins with the heading of chap. vii and continues to the close of chap. x. It carries us forward, in its survey of the prophet's ministry, to the end of the reign of Jehoiakim. We must not however suppose that it is a sequel to the preceding section. It is rather an independent survey from a standpoint, and with a governing idea, of its own. In chaps. iv-vi the standpoint was the Market; here, it is the Temple. There, the governing idea was ethical; here, it is ritual. The section is loosely put together, and contains insertions of a later age. We may divide it thus: Chaps. vii, i-vii, 4; chap. viii, 5-22; chap. ix, 1-22 with chap. x, 17-23; chap. ix, 13-26; chap. x, 1-16. We shall discuss each of these divisions in turn.

Chaps. vii, i-viii, 4. Let us first of all, and without critical presupposition, review the chapter as it lies before us. It purports to be a summary of an address delivered by the prophet in the Temple courts, of which we shall hear more in chap. xxvi. Under Divine orders, the prophet takes his stand at the gates of the Temple on the occasion of a national gathering—a festival or a fast day, according to the interpretation put on a somewhat dubious phrase in verse 10. He sees the people streaming in from

all quarters of the city, and from the towns and villages of Judah—a motley crew, many of them seamed and scarred by gross excess, all of them in just that mood of tremulous excitement which made them open to appeal. He watches them as they look round with satisfaction on the great piles of masonry, and draw the pleasing inference that here, within the precincts of Jahveh's house, no evil can befall them. He hears them offer prayers, with a passionate intensity which betrays the shallowness of a religious experience that had no root in, or hold over their moral nature. “Stealing, murdering, committing adultery, and swearing falsely, burning incense to Baal and going after other gods whom ye know not, will ye come and stand before Me in this place which is called by my name, and say, ‘Deliver us,’ to do all these abominations?” They do not, as our English version suggests, urge the plea of the Fatalist, that they are “delivered,” i.e. predestined, to commit such sins, and therefore blameless. Rather they pray for deliverance from some impending calamity,<sup>1</sup> and then, when a merciful heaven has granted their prayers, they relapse into their old sins. The phrase, “To do all these abominations,” suggests not the conscious aim but the actual issue.<sup>2</sup> Thus the House of Jahveh has become, as it was in our Lord's day, a den of robbers. Earnest and urgent is the prophet's appeal for the one thing that could improve the outlook—a genuine repentance. Stern and relentless is the tone in which he declares the inevitable issue of the present situation. “Go now

<sup>1</sup> If we retain the present pointing in verse 10 (*we are delivered*), we must understand them to give thanks for prayers already answered. The result is the same.

<sup>2</sup> Compare New Testament use of *īva*; and cf. Dr. Driver's Note on Deut. xxix. 18.

to my house in Shiloh . . . and see what I have done to it for the wickedness of my people Israel." It was a great object lesson. The past is index to the future. The ruin that had befallen the first Sanctuary in Shiloh could scarcely fail to overtake the later and more splendid Temple in Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup>

Having shown us the Temple courts, the prophet is supposed to lead us through the city streets, pointing out such a scene as might, any day, be witnessed there. Here is a family party (Hogarth's pencil might have sketched them !)—the children gathering faggots, the men kindling and feeding a fire, the women kneading dough and baking little horn-shaped cakes<sup>2</sup> which they offer on way-side shrines or on the roofs of their houses to Ashtoreth, the Moon Goddess, whom they worship as the Queen of Heaven, and to whom they pray for the blessings of a happy home and a numerous progeny. Such heathen rites, practised in the Holy City, and before the face of Jahveh, made their Temple worship, solemn and stately as

<sup>1</sup> Shiloh lay in Ephraim, north of Bethel in a valley, shut in by low limestone hills. To Shiloh, the Ark that had led the people through the Wilderness, was transferred from Gilgal. After the conquest of the land, the Tribes returned to Shiloh, to divide their inheritances. There, from time to time, they gathered, after the vintage, with dance and song and simple rites (Judges xxi. 19). Still later, when the Tabernacle had been superseded by a permanent structure, we see the aged Eli and the young Samuel there. The sanctuary disappeared during the wars with the Philistines in the days of Saul. When the history is resumed the priesthood is supplanted by the monarchy ; and Jerusalem takes the place of Shiloh as the political and religious capital. According to chap. xli, 5, Shiloh was again inhabited in our prophet's time, and ruins of the old sanctuary may still have been visible.

<sup>2</sup> Compare the phrase **בְּצִבְעָן** in chap. xliv. 19. For a similar custom in Athens, see Liddel and Scott under *σελήνη*.

it was, utterly worthless. In Jahveh's name the prophet rejects it all.

Having shown us the Temple courts and the city streets, he leads us next through the gates of the city. From the Dead Sea up to the walls of Jerusalem runs a valley which forks just at that point, forming, on the East, the Valley of the Kedron, and, on the South and West, the Valley of Hinnom. It is a curious instance of the power of association, that the gloomy gorge of Kedron, hallowed by the presence of our Saviour, who must often have crossed it on His way to Bethany, has become a symbol of all that is sweet and sacred; while the other, shallow and sunny and accurately described by Milton as "The pleasant Vale of Hinnom," has become under the Greek form of its name, Gehenna,<sup>1</sup> a symbol of Hell. It was originally the place of public sepulture. There, too, the Furnaces, used by the potters for their work, lit up the night with lurid glare. And there the people had set up altars to Baal and Moloch, and sacrificed their children in the fire. It was the last effort of a despairing age to propitiate an angry Heaven. As the smoke wreaths curled slowly upward into the sky, as men, with knitted brows, and women, with pitiful drawn faces, steeled themselves to make the last surrender to a god they knew not, all the passion in the prophet's soul broke out, not on them, but on those who misled them and on the system which held them bound. In a passage, certainly not without a gruesome vividness, the spot thus cursed, and with it the whole city, is given over to desolation. "They shall bury in Tophet till there be no more room for a grave." The city is stricken with pestilence; and the

<sup>1</sup> Compare the French verb gêner (or mettre à la gène), originally to torture.

dead are flung out, without a prayer, to be food for beasts and birds. War follows on the heels of pestilence. Graves are desecrated, and the bones of kings and priest and prophet are left to bleach under the noonday sun, or to gleam white against the pale moonlight in sight of all the Host of Heaven which they had vainly worshipped (chap. viii, 1-4). In such terrible times, Death might well seem a tender grace, more to be desired than life.

The whole passage is marked by a certain unity, and betrays a hand not unskilful in the selection and arrangement of material. It is only on closer examination that we discover its real nature. Verses 1-15 are, without doubt, prophetic in substance. The tone is strongly ethical; the style vigorous and, in places, epigrammatic. But on comparing them with chap. xxvi, we find ourselves obliged to presuppose an earlier text, the common quarry from which both passages have drawn. The Editorial hand is manifest in the introduction (verses 1-3), which is more briefly rendered in the LXX thus: Hear ye the word of Jahveh, all Judah. In verse 16 the prophet is forbidden to make further effort for the salvation of his people. Such a command is alien to the whole spirit of Jeremiah's ministry; it reflects the judgment passed by a later age on the hopelessness of his mission. It recurs in chap. xiv, 11. Verses 17-19 are identical with chap. xliv, 18-19; verses 32, 33 with chap. xix, 6-9; and verse 34 with xxv, 11. At various points, the audience, whom the prophet is supposed to address, is recalled to the reader's mind; but repeatedly it is allowed to fade into the distance. We drift along a line of thought which, profitable and impressive as we pursue it in private, precludes the idea of a public address. All this conveys to our minds

the impression that we are dealing here, not with an actual incident, but with the Editorial setting provided for those prophetic oracles which accompany and follow.

We come now to verses 21-29. The passage is important, difficult and composite, and may be given in full.

Verse 21. Add your burnt offerings to your sacrifices,  
And eat ye flesh.

(22) For I spake not to your fathers, nor gave them commandment in the day when I brought them out of Egypt concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices ; (23) but this word I commanded them saying, Hearken to my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people ; and ye shall walk in all the way that I shall command you, that it may be well with you. (24) But they hearkened not, nor lent their ear, but they walked in their own counsels and in the stubbornness of their wicked heart ; they went backward and not forward. (25) From the day when your fathers went out of the Land of Egypt until this day, I have sent you all my servants, the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them ; (26) but they hearkened not to me, nor inclined their ear, and they hardened their neck and did worse than their fathers. (27) And thou shalt speak to them all these words, and they will not hearken to thee, and thou shalt call unto them, and they will not answer. (28) And thou shalt say unto them :

Verse 28. This is the people that have not hearkened  
To the voice of Jahveh, their God,  
They received not correction ; perished  
Is truth from their mouth.

Verse 29. Shave thy locks, and cast them from thee,  
Raise a coronach ;  
For Jahveh hath rejected and renounced  
The generation of his indignation.

In verse 21 we recognize the stamp of the true prophet. The verse is original in thought, and poetic in form. In Israel, sacrifices were of two kinds ; the burnt offering wholly consumed on the altar, and the peace offer-

ing of which only a part was burned, while the rest was eaten at a sacrificial meal by the offerer and his friends. The people were as pointed in reserving the former, as they were lavish in their enjoyment of the latter. Yet the prophet intimates that they are welcome to retain both, thus greatly adding to the good cheer of the sacrificial meals. Ritual distinctions have no value in Jahveh's sight. Wholly burned or in part eaten, the victim is still what it was at the first—mere flesh ! The force of this bold utterance is heightened if, passing by the intervening verses, we bring it into immediate connexion with verse 28. Jahveh's heart is set only on obedience, and that they refuse Him. Hence the note of doom sounded in verse 29. The growth of the hair is a natural index of physical strength and vital energy. Accordingly, among ourselves, the tonsure is the symbol of a dedicated life. On the other hand, an Arab, if he dream that his hair is shaven, takes it as an omen of death. In the same way, when Jerusalem is bidden shave her locks and cast them from her, it means that her life is forfeit.

Between these fragments of a genuine oracle, the intervening verses form an ample Editorial note, the point of which is not by any means as clear as we could wish. It is easy to imagine how a sympathetic Editor, not appreciating the irony of verse 21, might stumble over such a combination as verses 21 and 28 ; the licence given by the one seeming to conflict with the duty imposed by the other. It is not so easy to see how he meant to soften the antinomy. The Rabbis affirm that when he makes Jahveh say : “ I spake not to your fathers in the day when I brought them out of Egypt, etc., ” he distinguishes the actual day of the Exodus from the period which followed. Others

believe that the implied contrast lies between the subject of which, and the object with (or concerning) which, Jahveh spake. Ewald distinguishes between voluntary offerings and those imposed by statute. To which, if any, of these interpretations of his words the Editor would have adhered, it is impossible to say.

The verse has been much debated in the interest of critical theories. The Pentateuchal legislation contains at least three distinct elements. The first (which is prophetic) deals with the simple rites common to all Nature-religions.<sup>1</sup> The second (Deuteronomic) aims at unifying the worship of Jahveh within Israel. The third (so-called Priestly Code) elaborates the ritual of the Temple, and rigidly enforces it. The result of critical research has been to represent these elements, not as interwoven strands, but as successive strata, of which the third is post-exilic. In support of this, appeal is made to the verse before us (verse 22). It is affirmed, on the strength of it, that the Priestly Code was manifestly unknown to Jeremiah, and must therefore have been post-exilic.<sup>2</sup> To this it is replied that, if these words imply the non-existence of the Priestly Code in our prophet's day, they imply the non-existence of Deuteronomy as well; for there, also, sacrifices are mentioned. That is to say, the critics, by proving too much, have proved nothing. When however a more conservative critic proceeds, himself, to interpret this difficult verse; when he treats it as mere rhetoric, i.e., a large and loose way of speaking or writing; when e.g., Giesebricht affirms, on the ground of this verse, that Jeremiah cannot have known the more detailed legislation of the

<sup>1</sup> Known to critics as JE, from its use of the Divine name, Jehovah and Elohim.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. by Orelli.

Priestly Code, but may have known the simpler regulations of Deuteronomy and the Jehovahist ; he is by no means convincing. Rhetoric must have limits. I have no right, in arguing a case, to affirm that I have no money, as a rhetorical way of saying, I have only a little ; or, I never saw a man, as a rhetorical way of saying, I do not know him well ; or, I was never in a particular place, meaning, It is not my regular resort. If it is said here that Jehovah “ spake not of sacrifices,” it cannot have been meant that He said a little about them, but not so much as He said about something else !

I own that the objections to either interpretation of this difficult verse are serious. What it really means, and how it bears on conflicting critical theories, must, I suspect, be left an open question till we discover when, and by whom, it was written. The one thing practically certain is that Jeremiah would never have blunted the edge of his own appeal, or distracted the attention of his hearers from a grave moral issue raised, by the introduction of a side-issue like this. We are dealing here with an Editor, rather than a prophet. Having introduced the Exodus and “ the Fathers,” he gives himself rein, and, for a time, seems to have forgotten the conditions under which he is supposed to write. With a little difficulty he recovers himself in verse 27, the close of which is a quotation from Isaiah.<sup>1</sup>

If the Editorial note is of little critical value, the Oracle in which it is embedded is of the greatest interest, as indicating the religious pre-supposition which lies behind all our prophet’s utterance. His idea of Jehovah is strongly ethical, as opposed to Baal and Chemosh, who, so long as their altars streamed with blood, cared for little else. Jehovah’s heart is set on

<sup>1</sup> Chap. 1, 2.

goodness. Conduct and character are the goal toward which He works. The cruel and inhuman rites which shock even the heathen are elsewhere denounced (verses 30, 31); here, even the innocent and beautiful rites of popular religion are discounted as at best indifferent. Religion in its essence is spiritual. Now the spiritual is the free; and freedom in worship is menaced quite as much by the rites that burden it, as by the rules that restrain it, in its approach to God. Evidently the personal element in true religion, that great idea which at a later period takes shape in the prophet's mind, is already stirring there and prompts him here.

Jeremiah finds a modern parallel in Milton. Never was genius more intensely artistic, more responsive to beauty alike in form and sound; no one has done more to enrich and ennable our religious phraseology; and yet, in the great controversy of his age, he ranges himself, without hesitation, and in the interests of Freedom and Spirituality, on the side of Purism.<sup>1</sup> The same great question, as to the relation of the ritual to the ethical, is still active, underlying the Problem of Faith and Freedom as it presses for solution, with remarkable insistence and vitality, on the mind of the Church to-day.<sup>2</sup>

Chap. VIII. Having provided the needful setting, and created the ecclesiastical atmosphere he desired, the Editor presents a series of prophetic utterances dealing with the moral deterioration and impending judgment of the people. The idea of a Temple-address

<sup>1</sup> See a characteristic passage at the beginning of the treatise on *Religious Reformation in England*; too long to be quoted here.

<sup>2</sup> See Professor Oman's *Ker Lectures*, pp. 18, 19.

scarcely influences the sequel, save through an occasional insertion, such as chap. ix, 12-16.

Verses 4-9. The prophet dwells on the hopeless and insensate stubbornness of the people. Even experience fails to teach them. It is with them a perpetual backsliding. Like the horse maddened by the noise of battle, they are past all control and rush blindly on their fate. In one of those tender and beautiful passages which light up the pages of this sternest of all moralists, reason in man is contrasted with instinct in birds, very much to the advantage of the latter. Birds, observing Nature, fly before the storm, and enjoy a perpetual summer ; man, blind to the signs of the times, meets a relentless doom.

Verse 7. Even the stork in the heaven  
 Knows her appointed times.  
 And the turtle and the circling swallow observe  
 The time of their coming.  
 But my people know not  
 The judgments of Jahveh.

In verse 8 a further contrast is drawn between the boasted wisdom of an over-subtle age, and their real folly in rejecting the only source of true wisdom in Jahveh's word.

How can ye say we are wise,  
 Jahveh's law is with us ?  
 Surely unto falsehood hath wrought  
 The false pen of the scribe.

The reference to "the false pen" can scarcely be, as Duhm supposes, pointed against the Deuteronomic legislation, but only against those heathen innovations, against which the prophet has so lately been inveighing.<sup>1</sup> The judgment falls with pitiless severity, stripping

<sup>1</sup> See chap. viii, 31.

the nation bare, as vines when the clusters have been gathered, or as trees whose leaves have fallen, nipped by the winter's frost.

Verse 13. I will reap their harvest, saith Jahveh ;

There shall be no grapes on the vine,  
And there shall be no figs on the fig-tree  
And their leaf shall wither.

[The verse is followed by an enigmatic utterance, destined, like verses 10-12, for exegetical purposes, and, like them, Editorial in its origin : " The things that I have given them (i.e. the fruits of the earth and the blessings of the covenant) shall pass away." Such is the rendering of our A.V. But, however suitable in itself to the context, it cannot possibly be imposed on the text. A slight emendation enables us to read as follows : " I will give them those who shall pass over them." The people have rejected Jahveh, and He hands them over to alien kings.]

Verses 14-17. We are thus prepared for the note of judgment which sounds in the following passage. Duhrm believes it to be another of the Scythian Songs. It seems to me to point rather to a later period and a more acute crisis. Before the Scythians, the people sought safety in flight ; now, Jahveh has given them over, and they shut themselves in with Death.

Verse 14. Wherefore sit we still ?

Assemble ye yourselves.  
Let us go into the fenced cities,  
And let us perish there.  
For Jahveh our God hath given us to perdition.  
He hath given us gall to drink.

Verse 16. From Dan is heard a noise—

The snorting of his horses,  
And the neighing of his chargers.  
The whole land trembleth.  
And they come, and devour the land,  
The city and her inhabitants.

Verse 17. For behold, I send against you  
Serpents and basilisks.

There is no charming of them,  
And they shall bite you.

The passage clearly is descriptive, not imaginative. The reference can only be to the advance of the Chaldean army in the later years of Jehoiakim's reign. Horses were still to the Jews, like the elephants of Pyrrhus to the Roman, a source of terror. As they shook their manes and reared, they seemed like basilisks, i.e. fabulous creatures of the serpent kind. In verse 15 we have an Editorial note, based on chap. xiv, verse 19. Here, where the situation is admittedly hopeless, it is out of place.<sup>1</sup>

Verses 18-22. We have here one of the most exquisite passages in the book. We make no apology to the reader for transcribing it in full.

Verse 18. What comfort is there in my travail ?  
My heart is sick in me.

Verse 19. Behold, the cry of the Daughter of my people  
From a far country.

Is not Jahveh in Zion ?  
Is not her king in her ?  
Why have they provoked me with their graven  
images,  
With the vanities of strangers.

Verse 20. Harvest is passed, summer is ended,  
And we are not saved.

Verse 21. For the hurt of the Daughter of my people I go  
mourning.  
Desolation taketh hold on me.

Verse 22. Is there no balm in Gilead ?  
Is no physician there ?  
Why, then, have they not wrought  
Healing for the Daughter of my people ?

From a far country the prophet hears the plaintive  
cry of his countrymen already in exile. The city is  
still standing ; but it seems an empty shell, from which

<sup>1</sup> " We wait for good peace, but no good cometh," etc.

the life is gone out. The glory is departed, for Jahveh, her King, has given her up. Behind her lay long centuries of splendid privilege—a glorious summer, whose every hour moved slowly overhead, burdened with blessing. The ripened corn is cut; the last sheaf borne to the threshingfloor; the fields stand bare and comfortless, under dripping skies. But the people are not saved; they have no profit from the past, no provision for the future. In this uttermost of distress, the prophet can find no comfort for his own sick heart, no healing for his wounded people. Balm was found in Gilead; and where the balm is found, one might expect to find the physician too—hands skilled to apply it to the wound. The application is plain. Salvation was of the Jews; the tree of life, whose leaves were for the healing of the nations, was rooted in her soil. Why then should her own children pine and perish? It is a cry which rises unbidden from many a heart in our own land to-day, as we think of England, so richly blessed, so highly honoured in the past. Her flag means freedom wherever it is unfurled on the breeze; her white-winged ships bear the Word of Life to distant shores. And yet how many of her own children live and die in a hopeless misery, worse than bondage! “Is there no balm in Gilead, no physician there?”

Chap. ix opens with a prolonged diagnosis of the moral condition of the people (verses 1-9). This is followed by two pieces, poetic in form, elegiac in spirit, of great beauty and highly characteristic of our prophet in his most impassioned moods (verse 10 and verses 17-22). Between these two poetic pieces is interposed a note of considerable dimensions manifestly Editorial in origin (verses 11-16). The second poetic passage is followed by two brief oracles, probably

Jeremian but of uncertain date. With chap. ix, 17-22, should be associated the closing verses of Chap. x (verses 17-24).

Ch. ix. verse 1. Oh, that my head were waters,  
 And mine eyes a fountain of tears ;  
 That I might weep, day and night,  
 For the slain of the Daughter of my people.

Verse 2. Oh, that I had in the Desert  
 Some far-off retreat.  
 That I might leave my people,  
 And go from them !

Verse 3. For they are all adulterers,  
 An assembly of traitors ;  
 And they bend their tongue  
 As a deceitful bow.  
 For falsehood, and not for truth,  
 Are they mighty in the land ;  
 Yea, from evil to evil they go forward,  
 And they know not Jahveh !

Verse 4. Be ye ware, every one of his neighbour,  
 And trust not in a brother ;  
 For every brother doth utterly supplant,  
 He goeth about to slander.

Verse 5. And every one deceiveth his neighbour ;  
 They speak not truth.  
 They 'custom their tongues to speak falsehood.  
 They act perversely and fail to repent.

Verse 6. Fraud on fraud, deceit on deceit.  
 They will not acknowledge Jahveh.

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Verse 7. Therefore, thus saith Jahveh,  
 See, I will prove them,  
 And try them, for I will set my face  
 'Gainst the wickedness of the Daughter of my  
 people.

Verse 8. An arrow of Death is their tongue ;  
 It speaketh deceit ;  
 In their mouth is peace, but in their heart  
 They lay an ambush.

Verse 9. Shall I not visit them for these things ?  
 It is the oracle of Jahveh.  
 Or, on a people such as this,  
 Shall not my soul take vengeance ?

In verse 1 "a far-off retreat" is probably a better rendering of the original than : "a lodge of wayfaring men." It follows the LXX<sup>1</sup> and can easily be justified by a slight emendation of the Hebrew text. What the prophet seeks, is not shelter for the night, but final escape from the presence and, if possible, the memory of all the evil he can never mend. The verse suggests Cooper's well known lines, which are little else than a metrical version of the passage.

Oh, for a lodge in some blank wilderness,  
 A boundless contiguity of space !  
 Where rumour of oppression and deceit,  
 Of unsuccessful or successful war  
 Might never reach me more. My ear is pained,  
 My soul is sick with every day's report  
 Of wrong and outrage with which earth is filled.  
 There is no flesh in man's obdurate heart ;  
 It does not feel for man : the natural bond  
 Of brotherhood is severed as the flax  
 That falls asunder at the touch of fire.

[The reader will notice how different are these fragments from the prophet's hand, rugged and pregnant, often to the point of obscurity, from those editorial passages which, from time to time, interrupt them. The latter are always easy and flowing, but usually commonplace in thought and conventional in phraseology.]

Two fragments follow in which the knell of doom is sounded over the city.

<sup>1</sup> εσχατος σταθμος (אַתְּלָה אַתְּ). See some excellent remarks on "an Abandoned Wish," by the Rev. Alex. Ramsay in his *Studies in Jeremiah*.

## I

Verse 10. Over the mountains will I raise a wailing,  
 And over the pastures of the Desert ;  
 For they are waste ; no more is heard  
 The lowing of the cattle.  
 From the birds of the air even to the beast,  
 They are driven and fled.

Verse 11. And I will make Jerusalem a heap,  
 A den of jackals ;  
 And the cities of Judah a desolation,  
 None dwelling there.

## II

Verse 17. Consider ye, and call  
 For the mourning women ;  
 And send for the wise women,  
 And let them come,

Verse 18. And let them make haste, and upraise  
 A wailing over us,  
 And let our eyes run down with tears, our lids  
 O'erflow with water.

Verse 19. For lo ! a wailing is heard from Zion :  
 How are we spoiled !  
 We are greatly shamed, for they have laid low  
 Our dwelling places ;

Verse 20. Yea, hearken, ye women, to my word,  
 And let your ears hear ;  
 And teach your daughters a coronach,  
 And every woman her fellow.

Verse 21. For Death has come up by our windows,  
 He has entered our palaces,  
 Cutting off the child in the street  
 And the youths in the thoro'fares,

Verse 22. And the corpses of men shall fall  
 On the face of the field,  
 Even as sheaves after the reaper,  
 None gathering up.

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In connexion with this Dirge, should be read the closing verses of chap. x (verses 17-23). The passage

is composite, containing some prophetic fragments interspersed with Editorial notes. Thus :

Verse 17. Gather up thy bundle out of the land.  
Inhabitant of the besieged city.

[Verse 18. For thus saith Jahveh, Behold I will fling out the inhabitant of the land, this once ; and will bring on them distress, that they may pay the penalty.]

Verse 19. Thus I ; Woe's me for my hurt !  
Grievous is my wound ;  
I said, Surely it is my trouble,  
And I must bear it.  
All my cords are broken ;  
My flocks are gone ;  
There is none to stretch out my tent,  
To hang up my curtains !

[Verse 21. For the shepherds are brutish ; they have not sought Jahveh ; therefore they prosper not ; and all their flock is scattered.]

Verse 22. Hearken ! a rumour and a great shaking  
From the North country.  
To make the cities of Judah a desolation,  
A dwelling place of jackals !

[Verse 23. Oh, Jahveh, I know that a man's way is not his own. It is not in man to go and to establish his steps. (24) Correct me, Jahveh, only let it be with judgment ; not in Thy fury, lest Thou make me very few. (25) Pour out Thy fierce anger on the nations who have not known Thee, and on the families that have not called on the name. For they have devoured Jacob and consumed him and laid waste his habitation.]

Chap. ix, 23, 24, contains a brief Mashal, or proverbial utterance, from our prophet, in which the various ideals of life, current in his own day, e.g. the literary, the military, and the commercial, are contrasted with the true (the religious) ideal, which includes them all. "He that glorieth, let him glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that

I am Jahveh, exercising lovingkindness, righteousness and judgment in the earth, for in these do I delight."

Verses 25, 26 contain another Oracle, with Editorial introduction ("Behold, the day is come, saith Jahveh") and notes, in which our prophet, disregarding the fact that most, if not all, of the nations he mentions practised circumcision, regards them all as uncircumcized in Jahveh's sight, and degrades his own people to the level of these uncovenanted and uncircumcized heathen. In the present text verse 25 reads thus: "I will visit on all the (*circumcized with the*) uncircumcized."<sup>1</sup> This is, no doubt, an effort to modify an utterance which seemed to conflict with facts. In verse 26, a note is added, the aim of which seems to be, while preserving the original text, to blunt the edge of it, as far as it is turned on Israel. They at least are "uncircumcized only in heart."

Chap. x, 1-16, must be kept quite distinct from the context. The tone differs from that of the previous chapters; indeed, from anything that Jeremiah ever wrote. Elsewhere the people are regarded as sunk in gross idolatry, yet madly confiding in a God whom they outrage to His face; while the prophet's message is one of rebuke and warning. Here, they are represented as regarding the idolatrous customs of the heathen with a certain reserve; and turning a distant and doubtful eye toward Jahveh; while the writer's tone is didactic and reassuring. The bantering way in which he exposes the folly of idolatry, reminds us of the Second Isaiah.

The writer warns the people against the moral

<sup>1</sup> I agree with Erbt in thinking that the italicized words are an editorial interpolation.

paralysis which is apt to creep over us in presence of an ancient and overwhelming superstition (verse 2). Why should they fear what they do not understand? or worship that which can neither help nor hurt? What is an idol? First felled, next fashioned, then fixed up with nails lest it fall on its face, it must be carried, because it cannot go. It is no better than a scarecrow (verse 5), contrasting not only with its trappings—the silver and gold, and purple and blue, in which it is decked, but with the awe it is meant to inspire. This doctrine of the idols, what is at the heart of it, but—a stump? (verse 8). On the other hand, the writer dwells on the “aloneness” of Jahveh, the True and Living God, as based (*a*) on His sovereignty in Nature (verses 12, 13) and (*b*) on his covenant relation as the Portion of Jacob (verse 16). In the heart of this passage is inserted a single verse, written in Aramaic, “Thus shall ye say unto them, The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth shall perish from the earth and under these heavens.” The whole passage is probably an application of an old truth to new surroundings by a disciple of the prophet living in Babylon. Why it was inserted here, will always be a puzzle. Possibly it was copied into the text by a scribe, who meant it to serve as his comment on verses 23–25, in which the penitence of the people finds expression. The prophet’s appeal has not been in vain. Jahveh, He alone is God!

## CRITICAL NOTES ON CHAPS. VII-X

Ch. viii, verse 7. "The circling swallow" ; (R.V., the crane or the swallow). The first of these words is an epithet describing the familiar flight of the bird in rapid circles—or, perhaps, the twittering sound it makes. Compare Isa. xxxviii, 14 when the copulative is absent.

Verse 13a. "I will reap their harvests" ; reading פְּנִימָה ; and cf. Exod. xxiii, 16. The LXX render thus : καὶ συνάξουσιν τὰ γεννήματα αὐτῶν.

Verse 13c. Cornill suggests another reading of the editorial insertion : Their fruit shall not ripen. See his *Metrische Stücke*.

## Verses 14-17.

Verse 14. Closing phrase (For we have sinned v. Jahve) is Editorial.

Verse 16a. The LXX have a φώνη, which entitles us to insert the missing קול. In verse 16, the phrase : And all that is in it, is redundant in view of what follows.

## Verses 18-22.

Verse 18. "What comfort." A curious, composite phrase. Duhm prefers to render : Incurable, and so the LXX. अविता. In verse 20a, omit : "I am black"—absent from the LXX.

Verse 22. The word Healing ('Arûkah) stands, not for the long bandage which the surgeon winds about the wound, but for the sound flesh which grows over it. Here, as elsewhere, it is used with the verb 'Alah. The root occurs in another form in Ezra iv. 14 : "It is not sound policy on our part." Cf. Delitzsch's note on Isa. lviii, 8.

## Ch. ix, verses 1-9.

Verse 3a. The R.V. reads : They bend their tongue as it were their bow. In this rendering, which correctly

represents the M.T., the point of comparison between the tongue and the bow is not suggested. And why “*their bow*”? The final letter of Kashtam may stand for an original Mirmah (deceit), which was dropped from the text as a variant of the following word. Then we have thought and rhythm at once completed.

Verse 3b, read: “They know not Jahveh,” which has been abbreviated into ’Oth-i (=me). It is not Jahve, but the prophet who speaks. Verse 5 closes according to the text of the LXX.

Verse 7b. The LXX introduce: Wickedness. Read: **שְׁמַנְיָה**. The question is rhetorical.

Verse 8. “Arrow of death”—literally, arrow-hammered, i.e. sharpened.

Verses 10-11.

In verse 10 omit: “A weeping,” and “a lamentation.”

Also the phrase: So that none passeth through them.

It has become conventional.

Verses 11-16. A prosaic treatment of the same theme.

The passage may have been inserted as a preparation for verses 23, 24.

Verses 17-22.

Verse 17. The first “Let them come” has been inserted (originally as a marginal note), on account of the defective pointing of the same word at the close. Afterwards, it was introduced to the text. The LXX, objecting to its repetition, have rendered it, at the close of the verse, by *φθεγξάσθωσαν*. See Streane’s note.

Verse 18. A phrase has been inserted (“Because we have forsaken the land”) which, if retained, can only be understood as an *hysterical anticipation* of the inevitable. It is absent in the LXX; and detracts from the vivid, because restrained description of actual facts.

Verse 20. “To my words” instead of: To Jahve’s words. Omit the repetition: The words of my mouth.

Ch. x, verses 17-25.

Verse 19. Transpose the first pers. pronoun **וְ** to the beginning of the verse.

Verse 20. Omit: "My tents are spoiled" (which is borrowed from chap. iv, 20). The tents are mentioned immediately. Instead of: "My sons are gone out from me, and are no more" (בְּנִי יֵצְאִי וְאִנּוּ) read as above. The LXX reads: "My sons and my flocks are not" (בְּנִי וְצָאִי אִנּוּ); indicating at once the original text and the process of transformation.

Verses 23-25. The passage is Editorial—put into the mouth of the people (see verse 24), not of the prophet. It is, however, full of deep feeling and anything rather than conventional.

Verse 24. "Let it be with judgment"—i.e., as we say, with discrimination.

## THE PROBLEM OF PROVIDENCE

### CHAPTERS XI—XIII

**A** NEW section begins here, and continues to the end of chap. xiii when a fresh start is made. It is usually supposed that chap. xi and chap. xii are closely related, while chap. xiii hangs loosely by them as an appendix. On the contrary, chap. xi and chap. xiii stand in immediate and logical relation. In the former, we see the claims of Jahveh, as Israel's king, repudiated by the people; while, in the latter, we see the inevitable result. The nation that had broken the Covenant is itself broken and cast aside. Chap. xii, on the other hand, forms an interlude. In the most general terms, the question of the Moral Government of the world is raised and considered from various points of view.

[To what date shall we assign the prophetic fragments which the section contains? The question is difficult, the answer depending on the interpretation of several doubtful passages. Briefly, the following results may be indicated. The first half of chap. xi refers to the reign of Josiah, with its religious reforms, in which, as we shall see, the prophet bore his part. Then we advance into the reign of Jehoiakim, with its relapse into idolatry, and the prophet's rejection by his own townsmen of Anathoth. Chap. xii, verses 7-13, may be either historical, i.e. a record of actual events, or prophetic. i.e. an anticipation of the inevitable. With 2 Kings xxiv, 2, to guide us, we incline to the former view. Chap. xiii, verses 15-17 and verses 20-27, certainly reflect the political situation under Jehoiakim. Finally in chap. xiii, 18, we have a reference to the first captivity under Jehoiachin

Thus the section, as a whole, gives us another brief summary of the first half of the prophet's ministry, complete in itself, and inserted here at the central point of some later edition of his works. We shall therefore consider chap. xi, and then chap. xiii, reserving chap. xii for the close of our discussion of this section.]

Chap. xii. The prophet receives a commission to enforce on the people "all the words of this Covenant" (verse 2). The phrase implies a definite transaction, or document; and there can be little doubt that it refers to the new legislation of the Book of Deuteronomy. Egypt is described as the Iron Furnace (verse 4; cf. Deut. iv, 20); Canaan is the land flowing with milk and honey (verse 5, cf. Deut. vi, 3). The sum of man's duty is obedience to the voice of Jahveh, his God, (verse 4; cf. Deut. xiii, 4). The penalty of disobedience is the curse (verse 3, cf. Deut. xxviii, 16 ff.). The prophet's response: "Amen, Jahveh," may have suggested the passage, Deut. xxvii, 25.<sup>1</sup> We take it, then, that we have here a record of Jeremiah's early efforts in support of the new Movement. If it was to be permanent and national, means must be taken to explain and enforce its provisions beyond the capital; and it was natural that the young prophet should enlist in an enterprise with which he was in hearty sympathy. The fact that the historical Books of Scripture make no mention of him in connexion with the Movement, may be easily explained. The part that he, still a young and unknown man, played in it may easily have escaped his contemporaries. On the other hand it was natural that it should bulk largely in those reminiscences of his career, based on his personal testimony, which were preserved by Baruch. On these, the Editor has drawn. Verses 7, 8 correspond closely to chap. vii, 24-26.

<sup>1</sup> This passage, as indeed the whole of chap. xxvii, is of later origin than the rest of the Book. See Driver's *Deuteronomy*.

The LXX omit both verses, with the exception of the last clause of verse 8 : " Yet they obeyed not." This brevity is certainly impressive.

The prophet's success was small. The early death of Josiah precipitated a reaction which, perhaps from the first, had been inevitable. The prophet brands this reaction, aimed, as it was, against the claims of Jahveh, Israel's King, and the Covenant, or new Constitution of the realm, as a conspiracy. Passing over another Editorial insertion (verses 10-14), we come to a genuine prophetic fragment, in the familiar measure, marked by the directness and pregnancy which characterize the utterances of the prophet.

Chap. xi.

Verse 15. Wherefore hath my Beloved, in my house,  
Wrought lewdness ?

Shall prayers and sacrifices absolve  
Thee of thy guilt ?

Verse 16. A wide spreading shapely olive  
They have called thee,  
With a swishing sound I have kindled a fire,  
And thy branches are broken.

The attitude of the people, their reliance on Temple services, prayers and sacrifices, to condone for the evil of their lives, is familiar to us. Like a fair but fruitless olive tree, the nation spreads out her leafy branches. But the storm breaks ; the lightnings kindle ; and, with the swish of a rushing wind, the fire is fanned and her branches are broken.

It seems that most of the prophet's time was devoted, just then, to his native place. Anathoth was a city of priests ; and, if it could be won over, might become a stronghold of progressive principles. But it was intensely conservative, and proved impregnable. The prophet narrates, with the utmost naïveté, how he be-

gan his work, full of hope, feeling quite at home—a child, amid the scenes of his childhood, little dreaming of the detestation in which he, and his doctrines, were held. He was like “a pet lamb,” fallen into the hands of robbers and led to slaughter. They said—

Verse 19. Let us destroy the tree with its fruit,  
And let us cut him off;  
And his name shall be no more remembered  
In the land of the living.

The word here rendered *Fruit* (Lehem=Bread) is not elsewhere used of the fruit of the tree. Perhaps we should read another word (Lēhō=His sap) in its place. Any way, they made their meaning quite plain. Root and branch, the prophet must be got rid of. From his angry townsmen the prophet appeals to Jahveh, “who trieth the reins and heart,” i.e. “the more delicate organs of life,”<sup>1</sup> the inner as well as the outer man. The phrase implies the thoroughness of the Divine diagnosis; and recalls to mind Milton’s “all-judging Jove.” The bitterest drop in the prophet’s cup was yet to be tasted. Not only his townsmen, but his own family, disapproved of his action. They preserved the decencies of domestic life (xii, 6), but they incited others to active opposition. The result seems to have been a riot, in which, with hue and cry, he was hounded out of the town, like one of Wesley’s Gospellers in later days. The severance of natural ties is always painful; in this case it seems to have led to an interruption of Jeremiah’s prophetic activity.

Chap. xiii. If now we turn to chap. xiii, we shall see how direct is the connexion. The nation has rejected Jahveh, and are themselves in their turn rejected by Him. In two parabolic actions the prophet gives expression to this idea.

<sup>1</sup> Schultz, *Old Test. Theology*.

(A) He is bidden take a linen girdle and put it on his loins. The fact that the girdle is of linen, scarcely entitles us to see here a reference to the priestly vocation of Israel. But it cannot have been without significance that the prophet selected a girdle of the finest texture, instead of a strip of coarse leather, such as the peasant fastens round his waist. When it is soiled by wear he is bidden take it to Perath, and hide it in a hole of the rock ; thus exposing it to the action of the water while ensuring that it should not be swept away by the stream. If by Perath we understand, as most interpreters do, the Euphrates, we must suppose that the action thus recorded was visionary and idealistic ; and there is no difficulty in doing so.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, if we read Parah for Perath, and identify it with the Wady Fara near to Anathoth,<sup>2</sup> we may suppose that the prophet actually did what he here describes. The interpretation of the parable follows. A girdle like this is only a strip of cloth. You may tear it in shreds or twist it into any shape you please, and yet, when it is wound again and again round the loins of a man, the strength of the man passes into it ; he hangs on it his keys of office, his sword of state. So it had been with Israel. Jahveh had bound them to Himself. He had chosen them to be a name, and a praise, and a glory to Him in the earth. Strength and beauty had been in His sanctuary ; yet now—. At the point, the figure fails. What was involuntary and inevitable in the case of the girdle, was, in Israel's case, the consequence of his sin : They hearkened not.

(B) This impressive lesson is followed by another. The

<sup>1</sup> Erbt supports this interpretation of Perath, and yet maintains the actual occurrence of what is narrated. But the passage in which he unfolds his view is not nearly so convincing as it is lively.

<sup>2</sup> See Joshua xviii, 23.

prophet finds himself once more under orders. The incident that follows (verses 12-14) may have been enacted near the Potter's Gate, where we shall find the prophet again, watching the vessels as they came from the wheel. Laying his hand on one, he turns to the little circle of disciples who followed him, and quotes a familiar proverb: Every bottle shall be full of wine. Half scornful, half mystified, they replied to this enigmatic utterance: "Do we not know that, as a matter of course, every bottle shall be filled with wine? What else are they for?" In an instant the storm breaks, and the thunders of judgment roll over their heads. "Thus shalt thou say unto them, Thus saith Jahveh, Behold, I will fill all the inhabitants of this land, and the kings that sit on David's throne, and the priests and the prophets and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with drunkenness; and I will dash them one against another, father against son together, saith Jahveh." The transition of thought, from the intoxication of the people to the dissolution of their national life, seems a little abrupt. Indeed, we have an illustration here of the fragmentary way in which the words of the prophet, and the incidents of his life, have been preserved. If we turn to chap. xix, we find another, quite independent, record of the same incident, with the missing link supplied: "Thus saith Jahveh, Go and buy a potter's earthen vessel, and take the elders of the people and of the priests. . . . Then shalt thou break the bottle in the sight of the men that go with thee, and shalt say unto them, Thus saith Jahveh of Hosts, Even so will I break this people, and this city, as one breaketh a potter's bottle that cannot be mended again."<sup>1</sup> The bottle is first filled with wine, then broken by the prophet's hand, and all the

<sup>1</sup> Chap. xix, 10.

good wine is spilled. A profound spiritual truth underlies his action and his words. The intoxication of material prosperity leads to dissipation of moral energy and dissolution of national life. Disobedience of the Divine Law is self-destruction on the sinner's part. What is broken is not the Law, but the so-called Law breaker. In solemn tones, and pathetic figures, the prophet pours out his heart over the doomed nation, and summons them, while yet there is time, to repentance. The passage belongs to the later years of Jehoiakim.

Verse 15. Hearken, lend the ear, and be ye not haughty,  
For Jahveh hath spoken.

Verse 16. Give ye the glory to Jahveh, your God,  
Before it darken,  
And before that your feet stumble  
On the mirk mountains.  
And, while ye look for light, He send darkness,  
And cause the clouds to fall.

Verse 17. And if ye will not hearken, then, in secret,  
Must my soul weep,  
And mine eyes run down with tears ; for captive  
Is Jahveh's flock.

A brief fragment follows, of a later date, probably from the reign of Jehoiachin. In favour of this later date, note (a) the reference to the Queen Mother (cf. 2 Kings xxiv, 8, 15) ; and (b) the political situation, more advanced than in the preceding and following verses. The enemy is already in possession of the land, and there is now no call to repentance. Jerusalem lies on the southern edge of the central plateau of Palestine, practically inaccessible to an army save by the coast route. The foe, while advancing from the North, must approach her by the South-West ; and each city, as it falls, sounds a knell in the ears of the capital.

Verse 18. Say ye, to the king and the Queen Mother,  
 Lowly, sit ye down !  
 For, from your brows, hath fallen  
 Your beautiful crown.

Verse 19. The cities of the South are shut up,  
 None opening the doors.  
 And Judah is carried captive—  
 Captive every one.

The note of warning, already sounded in verse 17, is repeated in verse 20. Judah is overrun by nations whose friendships she had coveted, as she is now doomed to bear their yoke. The condition of the people is hopeless ; habit has become second nature ; the day for Reformation has gone by. In this profound diagnosis of the disease, in this conception of moral evil as a radical perversion of human nature, lay the necessity not only for the moral discipline through which they were passing, but for that spiritual Regeneration which was the prophet's burden in later years.

Verse 20. Lift up your eyes, and see,  
 From Northward coming ;  
 Where is the flock that was given thee,  
 Thy beautiful flock ?

Verse 21. What wilt thou do, when He sets  
 Over thee, as head,  
 Those whom thou didst use  
 To be thy friends ?  
 Shall not pains take hold of thee,  
 As a woman in travail ?

Verse 22. And when thou shalt say in thy heart,  
 Why are these come on me ?  
 For the multitude of thy transgressions, thy skirts  
 are discovered.  
 And thy heels made bare.

Verse 23. Can the Ethiop change his skin,  
 Or the leopard his spots ?

Then shalt thou, also, achieve to do well,  
Who art inured to evil.

Verse 24. I will scatter thee as driven stubble  
Before the desert blast.

Toward the close, the figures are conventional, and more applicable to the East than to the West. We see the stealthy hand of Justice, busy at the sinner's heels, discovering the secret of his guilt.

Chap. xii. If now we revert to chap. xii, we shall find the prophet raising, in the most general terms, the whole question of the Divine government.

Verse 1. Righteous Jahveh, how shall I strive ?  
Yet of Thy judgments let me talk with Thee.  
Why doth the way of the wicked prosper ?  
Why are all they at ease that deal treacherously ?

Verse 2. Thou hast planted them, and they have taken root.  
They grow up, they also bear fruit.  
Thou art near—in their mouth ;  
But far—from their hearts.

Verse 3. But Thou, Jahveh, hast known me ;  
Thou hast tried my heart toward Thee.  
Pluck them up ; as sheep for the shambles,  
Reserve them for the day of slaughter.

Verse 4. How long must the land mourn,  
And all the grass of the field wither ?  
Because of the wickedness of them that dwell in it,  
Beast and bird are fled.

(We have here four stanzas of four lines, each with three accented syllables.)

The prophet begins (verse 1) by assuming the Righteousness of Jahveh. German commentators say that the positive degree of the adjective (Righteous) here stands for the comparative. Jahveh is so righteous in comparison with His creatures, that we dare not call in question the justice of His awards. All that is

in our power is, in the spirit of reverent reserve, to talk with Him, as friend to friend, of those points in the Divine procedure that are obscure. It may appear as if, in making this vast assumption, the prophet were begging the question ; but, of course, it is not so. Even when, as we say, " everything is thrown into the crucible," the crucible itself is excepted. The utmost freedom not only consists with, but implies, definite limitations. We cannot think at all, unless we respect the laws of thought ; and no moral problem can be raised, that does not necessarily imply presuppositions and conditions. In thus assuming the absolute Righteousness of Jahveh, the prophet anticipates the conclusions of the modern Transcendental Philosophy, for which God, Immortality, and Freedom are Postulates of the Reason—Postulates which Reason compels us to make in the absence of any evidence, simply because " the attitude towards the world, which we take up when we regard ourselves as moral agents, involves their objective reality." <sup>1</sup> Neither Philosophy, nor Prophecy, undertake to demonstrate God. The function of the former is to correct our conception of Him ; that of the latter, to " justify His ways with men." The point is worth noting. In our own age there is a risk lest, in the interests of a frank and full discussion of fundamental questions, we yield too much. If we are not entitled to take anything for granted ; if feeling, instinct, moral ideals, great first principles which are beyond proof, are to count for nothing, the result is, not that we come face to face with the Problem of Life in its nakedness and austerity, but that the Problem ceases to exist. Only if God is there, need we raise the question at all, why things are as they are. But the more keenly we realize

<sup>1</sup> Caird's *Gifford Lectures*.

that God is, and what God is, the more urgently does the Problem press.

Even with this assumption, and within the limits thus laid down, the Problem is grave enough. Why do the wicked prosper? The question lay very near to the roots of religious life, for an Old Testament saint. No doubt, in early ages life was simple enough. Men got, on the whole, what they deserved—good or evil. And when evil came, its incidence was direct and personal, on the evil-doer. But as time passed, the social system became more complex, while the awards of Fortune were dispensed with a puzzling disregard of moral distinctions. To any one with the sense of right and wrong vigorous within him, it must often have seemed as if the supreme Powers were passing under a strange eclipse—Justice grown blind, and Jahveh Himself suffering from premature senility. The inevitable perplexity was intensified by the influence of foreign customs and ideals. It was open to the ungodly to make terms with these ; and, on the whole, they had a good time of it. The righteous had no such freedom ; they stood by Jahveh for good or evil, and went to the wall. It was this fact that imported a certain bitterness of feeling into their discussion of a great problem. They suffered for Jahveh ; and yet He reserved His choicest blessings for the unfaithful. These were not only planted, but watered and sunned, till their boughs bent under the weight of their fruitfulness. “Pluck them up by the roots,” cries the prophet ; “as sheep for the shambles, reserve them for the day of slaughter.”

Indeed the day had long gone by, when it was possible to paint life as in Ps. xxiii, with roseate colours ; or to dismiss a real difficulty by the skilful use of a poetic figure (Ps. xxx, 5). Nor was it competent to

appeal from the present to some impending readjustment of the balance ; as if the wheel of Fortune, one moment lifting the wicked to giddy heights of prosperity, might, the next, fling them into the dust (Ps. v, 37). On the contrary, " These have no bands in their death, but their strength is firm " (Ps. lxxii, 4). On the other hand, men could not yet extricate themselves from their social surroundings, so as to maintain a purely personal fellowship with God. Nor was it possible, with the imperfect knowledge of Him they possessed, to penetrate to that innermost Sanctuary, where Sorrow stands revealed, in her vicarious and priestly function, as the crowning grace of human life. That beautiful idea, which lights up the pages of the great prophet of the Exile, may also be traced back to Jeremiah. I cannot doubt that in a passage we have just studied, we see in him the prototype of the Suffering Servant— the " lamb led to slaughter." But we do not always see in ourselves what others may yet see in us. As a matter of fact, Jeremiah lived in the darkest age of Jewish history ; when the old conditions were strained to the breaking point, while the new and higher conception of a spiritual religion had not yet risen above the horizon. A contemporary of his, the prophet Habakkuk, faces the same problem, makes the same appeal, and makes it in almost the same language. We see him climbing the narrow staircase that leads to his watchtower, and looking out. The night is dark, the sky is starless, the horizon lurid with fires that tell of burning homesteads ; yet Heaven keeps silence, or speaks only to enjoin the submission of faith. More daring as a thinker, more expert in the analysis of a difficult situation, Jeremiah carries us

<sup>1</sup> Hab. ii, 1-4.

further than that ; probably as far as, under the conditions, man could go.

One other point should be noted in the prophet's statement of the Problem. By most critics verse 4 is omitted as a later interpolation—breaking the thread of thought, and introducing into a personal question considerations that seem quite irrelevant. But it seems to me, that precisely this verse is requisite to the final, because abstract, statement of the great Problem. The prophet no longer smarts under a sense of personal injustice ; he thinks rather of the land, Jahveh's inheritance, cursed by the malign influence of evil men. We have therefore retained it, as above.

(a) In Jahveh's reply we notice, first of all, the personal equation emphasized.

Verse 5. If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee,

How then wilt thou contend with horses ?  
And if, in the open country, thou hast fled,  
How wilt thou do in the Jungle of Jordan ?

Verse 6. For even thy brethren, and thy father's house,

Even they have betrayed thee, even they ;  
They have raised after thee a hue and cry.  
Trust them not, though they speak fair words.

The prophet has yielded to despondence and discontent, and thus unfitted himself for the discharge of the highest moral function, the judgment of others. There is something of softness and caressing in Jahveh's opening words : They have wearied thee. He deals with His servant, as with a tired child ; yet, while He soothes him, the edge of the reproof is keenly felt. In every act of vision there are three factors ; the organ, the object, and the medium. The medium is always the atmosphere ; in the case of distant objects, possibly

a lens as well. Now if the atmosphere is suffused with moisture, or if the lens be faulty, the impression conveyed to the brain must necessarily be erroneous. The object looms dim and bulky, through a mist ; or, it shows distorted by the glass. It is not less so with mental vision. No act of judgment is ever pure ; always there is the medium, physical and moral conditions which modify it. If a man is physically unfit, tired and jaded, it is impossible for him to take a sane and truthful, i.e. a cheerful view of life. If he is soured by disappointment, or warped by prejudice, he sees everything awry. But perhaps nothing so influences our judgment of others, as the sense of wrong-doing in ourselves. The failure to apply this simple principle, has been the spoiling of many lives. How many force themselves to think, and act, and work, under conditions which make good work impossible. At a time when men and women have grown hysterical with preternatural activity and morbid sensibility, it were well to remember Hawthorne's wise words : " What the world wants is to lay his weary head on the first convenient pillow, and to take an age-long nap." Then perhaps, blessed once more with a clear eye and tranquil spirit, we might see things as they are, and read off, at a glance, the enigma of life.

Another idea is interwoven with Jahveh's words, which must not be overlooked. The reward of Virtue is not the ease or indulgence we sometimes crave. It is not greater facility in doing the same thing over again ; but, rather, a fitness for some other and higher task. It is by faithfulness in little things we qualify for great. To have run with the footmen, is excellent training ; but, if they have beaten you, and wearied you, you are excluded, by the laws of the game, from contending with horses. Compare the open country, i.e.

level reaches, commanding an unbroken horizon,<sup>1</sup> with the Jungle of the Jordan, the narrow strip of under-growth fringing the river's brink. If there, where a child may walk alone and be safe, you have fled, startled by a step, scared by the scream of a wild bird, how will you do here ? To break through this, to breast wave after wave of the tangled brushwood, to beard the wild beast in his lair, and the lion foraging for his young, that were a task to try the nerve of the bravest. It is not easy to decide, what were the greater trials which lay before the prophet. Scarcely (one thinks) the treachery of his family, as distinct from the opposition of his townsmen. Such an interpretation seems inadequate. More probably, the contrast is drawn between private and personal sorrows (verse 6) and those impending national calamities which are unfolded in the second half of the chapter.

To sum up under this head ; in every act of Faith, the moral, not the mental, conditions are decisive. We might have been made so as to act with mechanical precision, incapable of a blunder. The influences that bear upon us and fashion us, might have been always and only in the direction of good. The final issue of life might have been discovered, a Heaven above, a Hell beneath us, with such indisputable and overwhelming clearness as practically to leave us no choice. But then, what of Virtue ? If the moral Problem implies Righteousness in God, not less does it imply freedom in man ; and with freedom, the necessity for decision. Faith is a conflict, a life-long conflict, a conflict the issues of which depend, not so much on the weight or volume of the brain, as upon the tone and temper of the spirit. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." As Browning puts it :

<sup>1</sup> So I venture to translate the Hebrew 'Areç Shālōm.

You call for faith.

I show you doubt to prove that faith exists,  
 Aye, when the fight begins within himself,  
 A man's worth something, God stoops o'er 's head.  
 Satan looks up between 's feet ; both tug ;  
 He's left, himself, i' the middle ; the soul wakes,  
 And grows. Prolong that battle throughout life ;  
 Never leave growing till the life to come.<sup>1</sup>

(b) Having emphasized the personal equation, Jahveh condescends to defend His own action.

Verse 7. I have forsaken mine house, and deserted  
 This, mine inheritance.

I have given the Beloved of my Soul  
 Into the hands of her foes.

Verse 8. Mine inheritance hath been to Me  
 As a lion in the forest.

She hath lifted her voice against Me,  
 Therefore I hate her.

Verse 9. A speckled bird is mine inheritance.  
 The birds are against her.

Gather ye all the beasts of the field,  
 Bring them to devour.

Verse 10. Many shepherds have destroyed My vineyard,  
 They have trampled my heritage.  
 They have transformed my delightsome heritage  
 Into a desolate wilderness.

Rebuked and chastened, the prophet is led to another standpoint. The sorrow and shame that press so heavy on his heart, are traced outward rather than upward, not to a Divine rescript, but to a human revolt. When the conditions are disordered, the organism must be diseased. Wild, angry, defiant, like a lion in the forest, the people have thrown off their allegiance to Jahveh. Deprived of His protection, they have naturally fallen a prey to their foes. A familiar fact in

<sup>1</sup> "Bishop Blougram's Apology."

Natural History is utilized to impress this idea. A bird of bright plumage, a canary escaped from the cage, fares ill in the forest, among birds of more sombre hue. They gather round her, and pluck at her, as if they would tear her to pieces. So it had been with Israel. The blessing of the Covenant, a good land, wide empire, spiritual worship, drew on her the envy of her neighbours. They thought to strip her of these, and to enrich themselves at her expense. The reaction of the moral on the material conditions of labour on the output, is expressed with proverbial pithiness.

Verse 13. They have sown wheat, and reaped thorns.  
Much pain, little profit.

And yet all through the passage there runs a note of tenderness and solicitude. It is "My portion," "My heritage," "the Beloved of My soul." "The Lord doth not afflict willingly or grieve the children of men." The sharpness of pain is like the edge of a surgeon's knife. It cuts deep, to root out the disease and restore health.

(c) In the end of the chapter (verses 14-17) a hint is given of final issues. The passage is rejected by many critics like Stade and Duhm, on the ground that the ingathering of the Gentiles, anticipated here, lay outside the prophet's ken. It certainly lay outside the range of practical politics in his day; but one hesitates to say that, in moments of lofty and impassioned thought, as here, it lay wholly beyond his horizon. Giesebrecht accepts the passage, with the exception of the last clause of verse 14: I will root out Judah from among them. He regards this as a later interpolation, on the ground that it is ignored in verses 15-17, where the subject is the gentile world exclusively. Certainly the clause is parenthetical; but may not this explain the fact that it does not influence the

grammatical structure of the following verses ? And does it not serve as an anticipation of the close of verse 16 ?

Jahveh is represented as dwelling in His own land, like an Arab sheikh, anxious to be on friendly terms with the humblest of His neighbours. But they are evil neighbours—meddlesome and mischievous. In the interests of His own household, He is forced to interfere, and root them out. Every judgment, as we have seen, has a side of mercy. The Exile broke up those old associations which were unfavourable to spiritual development. Then, when Judgment has done its work, it yields to Mercy. New political combinations ensue ; a spiritual commonwealth is established, in which Judah, as the Covenant People, is the predominant partner. “ They shall be builded up in the midst of my people.” The Gentiles are not, of course, absorbed, as proselytes, by the Jewish nation ; but rather are settled, each in his own land, on equal terms with these in Jahveh’s sight.

It was a visionary hour, when the far-off goal toward which all things are moving, stood revealed. The controversy with Jahveh ends, for the Prophet, in the silence of adoration.

## CRITICAL NOTES ON CHAPS. XI-XIII

Ch. xi, verses 2, 3. The text is probably corrupt. In verse 2 the verbs are both in the plural (Hear ye, speak ye); in verse 3, the verb is singular (Thou shalt say). Nägelsbach suggests three concentric circles, each addressed: viz., the people, the priests, and the prophet. But there is no indication of this. The most probable explanation is as follows—"Ye shall speak" was originally pointed as 2nd pers. sing. with pronominal suffix (Dibbātām: Thou shall speak them). When the present pointing was introduced, the previous verb was pointed in conformity with it (second plural). Erbt rejects verses 4, 5, on what seem to me insufficient grounds. But even so, the argument advanced in our text, holds.

## Verses 15-16.

Verse 15. For the Infinitive (to work) read 3rd sing. fem. of Kal ("Wrought"). For the construction, cf. Isa. iii, 15. "Shall prayers"—read Rönnim or Rinnôth.

The clause that follows in the M.T., "Then mightst thou rejoice (or, following the LXX: So mightst thou escape, 'בָּקַר אָנָּה') is probably a variant of the preceding phrases.

Verse 16a. Omit the reference to the fruit of the olive.

Verse 16b. "With a swishing sound." The same word occurs in Ezek. i, 24 with the same association, viz., of a stormy wind (produced by the wings of the cherubim). The adjective "great" has been inserted as a variant of the previous, unfamiliar word. The LXX have two renderings of this phrase. In the first (*εἰς φωνήν περιτομῆς*) the adjective (great) does not appear; in the second (and no doubt later) rendering, it does (*μεγάλη θλῆψις*). Omit "upon it." The verb (To kindle) is construed with another preposition. For: "He hath kindled," read: I will kindle.

Verses 21-23. If these verses are rejected as non-Jeremian, we have no indication of the sphere of the prophet's activity as referred to in the previous verses. If we accept them as (substantially) Jeremian, the whole passage is lighted up with a pathetic significance

(see also chap. xii, 6). This doubtless is Giesebrécht's strong point in retaining them; and I am inclined to agree with him.

Ch. xiii, verses 15-17. "Cause the clouds to fall." The word here used and rendered Darkness (A.V.), suggests not merely privation of light but rather the gloom produced by lowering thunder-clouds. It is frequent, in connexion with Theophanies (Exod. xx, 21 and 1 Kings viii, 12).

Verse 17a. At the close, the M.T. reads: "Because of pride." But this probably is a backward reference to verse 15.

Verse 17b. The second half is laden with repeated references to the prophet's tears. The lines are heavy enough, as it is.

Verses 20-24.

Verse 21. The rhythm is obscured by the transposition of a phrase ("as head").

Verse 22a. For the use of the verb to suggest a hostile invasion, see Deut. xxv, 18.

Verse 22b. "Thy heels are discovered." The M.T. reads: Thy heels suffer violence. This is not illuminating.

Ch. xii, verses 1-6.

Verse 1. The *Kî* is not temporal, but consequential. (See Davidson's Syn. § 150). Hitzig cites, by way of analogy, a phrase from Plutarch:  $\gammaραῦς εἰ$ ,  $\omega\varsigma$   $\piράγματα$   $\tauηλικαῦτα$   $\piράσσειν$ . Cf. Ps. cxvi. 10.

Verse 1. "Let me talk of Thy judgments"—for the later, Editorial, use of this phrase, see on chap. i, 15-16.

Verse 2a. Read (with Duhm): V<sup>e</sup>gam.

Verse 3. Omit, with the LXX: Thou seest me.

Verse 5. Read Bôrêah instead of Bôtêah (Hitzig).

Verses 7-13.

Verse 7. "My house"—here, not of the Temple but of the whole land. "The ideas of building and cultivating are closely connected. The Arabic *Amara* and German *Bauen* mean both; and the word for house or home-stead is extended so as to include the adjacent fields or territory." (W. R. S., *Religion of Semites*.)

Verse 9. Omit the interrogation, also קָבֵב and לְכֵי.

## THE FOUNTAIN OF LIVING WATERS

### CHAPTERS XIV-XVII

THE unity of this new section will be manifest to the reader, if he compare the following passages: chap. xiv, 1-9, 22; chap. xv, 18; chap. xvii, 5-8, 13. In scarcely any respect, however, does it answer to the ordinary idea of a prophecy. The elements of prediction and exposition are reduced to a minimum; and it is not possible to suppose that, under any circumstances, it was a spoken address. What we have here is a collection of prophetic fragments of a miscellaneous character, descriptive, historical, and devotional, sometimes poetic, sometimes prosaic in form, held together, more or less loosely, by a common background, the idea of a famine-stricken land. There is a certain chronological sequence, here as elsewhere, guiding the Editorial hand; but this must not be pressed. Omitting later insertions, the following is a rendering of the prophetic passages.

#### I

##### Chap. xiv, 2-10.

Verse 2. The cry of Jerusalem is gone up;  
Judah mourneth.  
Also her gates languish,  
Clothed in mourning to the ground.

Verse 3. Their nobles sent their little ones;  
They came to the reservoirs.  
They found no water, they returned  
With empty pitchers.

Verse 4. Lying untilled, the earth is dismayed,  
           For there is no rain.  
           Because of the land, the husbandmen are ashamed,  
           They cover their heads.

Verse 5. Yea also, the hind in the field  
           Forsaketh her young.

Verse 6. The wild asses stand, they sniff the breeze ;  
           Their eyes fail.

Verse 7. Though our iniquities testify against us,  
           Jahveh, do Thou for us !  
           For our backslidings are many.  
           Against Thee have we sinned.

Verse 8. The Hope of Israel, His Saviour  
           In troublous times !  
           Why should'st thou be a wayfarer,  
           Turning aside for a night ?

Verse 9. Why art thou as a man astonished ?  
           As one in whom is no help ?  
           Yet art Thou, Jahveh, in our midst ;  
           Leave us not !

Verse 10. Thus saith Jahveh of this people :  
           They love to wander,  
           They have not stayed their steps.  
           I have no pleasure in them.

## II

(a) Chap. xv, 5-9.

Verse 5. Yea, who shall pity thee, Jerusalem,  
           And who shall bemoan thee ?  
           And who shall turn aside, to ask  
           After thy health ?

Verse 6. Thou hast rejected Me, saith Jahveh,  
           And art gone backwards.  
           I have stretched out my hand, and destroyed thee.  
           No longer can I forbear.

Verse 7. Also I winnowed thee with a sieve,  
           In the gates of the land.  
           I have widowed and wasted thy people.  
           They went forth, but returned not.

Verse 8. Their widows are more in number,  
                   Than the sand of the sea.  
   I have brought upon the Mother of youth  
                   A destroyer at noon.

Verse 9. I have made fall on her, suddenly,  
                   Anguish and dismay.  
   She that had borne seven languisheth ;  
                   She panteth heavily.

Verse 10. Her sun has set, while it is yet day,  
                   She is shamed and confounded.  
   And their remnant will I give to the sword  
                   Before their enemy.

(b) Chap. xiv, 17b-18.

Verse 17b. Let mine eyes run down with tears,  
                   Day and night.  
   And let them not cease (from weeping).  
                   For the ruin is great.  
   For the virgin daughter of my people is broken,  
                   With a very grievous stroke.

Verse 18. If I go forth into the open country—  
                   Behold those slain by the sword.  
   And if I go to the city—  
                   Behold those wasted by famine.  
   For both prophet and priests go their rounds ;  
                   But they have no knowledge.

(c) Chap. xiv, 19-22.

Verse 19. Hast thou, indeed, rejected Judah ?  
                   Doth thy soul loathe Zion ?  
   Why hast thou smitten, and there is no healing ?  
                   We wait for peace, but no good comes.

Verse 20. Thou, Jahveh, knowest our wickedness ;  
                   For against Thee have we sinned.

Verse 21. Cause not Thy glorious throne to wither.  
                   Remember, break not Thy Covenant.

Verse 22. Who of the Gentile-gods can make us rain ?  
                   Or shall the heavens give us showers ?  
   Art not thou He, O Jahveh ?  
                   And we wait on Thee, for Thou hast done it.

## III

## Chap. xv, 10-19.

Verse 10. Woe is me, my mother, for thou hast borne me  
 A man of strife to all the land.  
 I borrowed not, and they have not lent me;  
 Every one of them curseth me.

Verse 11. By my troth, Jahveh, if I have slandered them  
 When they were in trouble—  
 Yea, I have interceded with Thee  
 On mine enemy's behalf!—

Verse 12. Wilt Thou have more regard to my earnest prayers  
 Than to the brazen altar-shields?

Verse 15. Jahveh, remember, and visit me,  
 And avenge my cause.  
 Because of my persecutors, tarry not,  
 Take Thou me away.  
 Yea, for Thy sake I have borne reproach  
 Of them that despise Thy word.

Verse 16. Consume them, so shall Thy word be  
 The rejoicing of my heart.

Verse 17. I have not sat, nor did I rejoice  
 In the council of sinners.  
 I sat alone, Thy hand upon me,  
 For Thou'st filled me with indignation.

Verse 18. Why is my grief perpetual?  
 And doth my wound fester?  
 Thou art become to me as a deceiver,  
 As streams that fail.

\* \* \* \*

Verse 19. Thus saith Jahveh, If thou wilt return,  
 Thou shalt stand before Me.  
 And if thou wilt take forth the precious from the  
 vile,  
 Thou shalt be as My mouth.

Let us now review these prophetic fragments.

(I) In vivid language the prophet describes a drought. In the gates of the city, where busy crowds were wont to gather, one can see, here and there, a gaunt figure clothed in sackcloth and bowed down in the attitude

of prayer. “The cry of the city has gone up.” The Drought is spoken of in the plural—Droughts. It was, as often happens in the East, recurrent, or rather prolonged through successive years. Again and again the rainy season came and went, and men hoped against hope, to be disappointed still. With each fresh failure of the rains, the Drought hardened. At first only the poor, latterly all classes, were affected by it. Even the upland springs were dry ; the fields were bare as the roadside. The hind calved in the open, and the wild asses sniffed the breeze for the scent of water. We notice the spiritual intuition of the prophet, which finds the cause of a nation’s suffering in its sin ; and the intensely sympathetic spirit which led him, disowned and discredited by the people, to cling to them still, and confess as his own the sins he spent a lifetime in combating. It is “our backsliding,” “our sin.” We are carried a long way into the heart of things, by such utterances. Thus deep, the Cross has struck its roots ; thus far, it casts its shadow behind it. We begin to realize that the sacrifice of Christ was not an isolated event, but the flower and fruit, the highest expression, of a great spiritual principle which runs all through history, and is still, as it was in the beginning, the saving salt of human life.

Meanwhile—What of Jahveh ? “A wayfaring man.” When we post through a land, starting out at dawn and pressing on till nightfall, we learn little, and care less, about what is happening around us. So Jahveh seemed to stand aloof from His people (verse 8). Or rather, though once swift to hear and strong to save, He is now as one overwhelmed by His own impotence in the face of dire calamity (verse 9a). And yet, though He sleep while the boat seems to sink, there is hope in the Saviour’s presence : Leave us not ! (verse 9b).

(II) From this point, the thought of the Drought retires into the background ; the condition of the people engages our attention. We are transported into the heart of a great crisis in the nation's history (chap. xv, 5-9). The passage reflects the panic that follows on a sudden and hopeless defeat. We see the flower of Judah's manhood gather ; we see them pass through the city gates and through the pleasant land, full of brave hopes, going to fight for their empire and their God ; and there, in the gates, i.e. the borders of the land, ere they have set foot on alien soil, the enemy meets them. The Angel of Death shakes his wings over them ; the breath of the Almighty sifts them and winnows them, scattering them throughout the lands. Bad news travel fast, and that night none slept in the city. Wives waited for their husbands, mothers for their sons, the young, the brave, who returned no more. "She that had borne seven" sits widowed by her childless hearth. So sudden and terrible a reverse was, as if the sun should set at noon or pass under an eclipse. Nor dared they hope the worst was yet past. With the deepest sorrow the prophet contemplates the sad opposite of all his heart had dreamed (chap. xiv, 17b, 18). Within the city, famine and pestilence have done their work ; without the gates, are the slain of the sword. Worst of all ; priest and prophet "go about," <sup>1</sup> like pedlars, hawking their wares, making a poor profit of the people's sin, with no knowledge of Jahveh such as might have saved.

Again the question arises, What of Jahveh ? (chap. xiv, 19-22). We see the people scanning the heavens for the promise of rain that never came. If pity fail, there is still the personal appeal. Zion is Jahveh's

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Sāhār=a market. There is no idea here of going into exile.

throne ; will He see it wither like the parched fields around and all its glory fade away ? Is He not pledged to His people ; and, if He break His Covenant, however He may justify His action to Himself, must He not seem to others a deceiver ? With all the naïveté of those child-like times, and something of the skill that is born of despair, the prophet seeks to move His heart. If He will not help, who can ? Nay, if He fail His people now, wherein does He differ from the false gods, who can give no rain ? By many critics this particular passage (xiv, 19-22) is rejected, but the phraseology is Jeremian throughout ; and the peculiar use of the word wither, in verse 21, with its unmistakable reference to the Drought, speaks for its prophetic origin.<sup>1</sup> I am not at all so sure of verse 22, which seems rather like a post-Exilic addition.

We have as yet made no attempt to fix the date of these oracles, but at this point, a suggestion may be offered.

From a passage which undoubtedly dates from the reign of Josiah, we have learned that, more or less throughout his reign, Judah suffered from drought (chap. iii, 3). The condition of the country, as described here, recalls another passage from an only slightly later date, in which the Egyptian soldiery, the children of Noph and Tahpanhes are described as overrunning the land (chap. ii, 16). Nor do we know of any defeat, suffered by Judah on the field during the prophet's lifetime, which was at all comparable for shame or sorrow to what is pictured here, save one, the Battle of

<sup>1</sup> Nabal ; compare the word 'umlal in verse 2. The root is the same (Bal, Mal, Pal) ; always with the idea of looseness—physical or moral. Compare Nebel=a dried skin, and N'belah =a corpse. See Hupfeld's note on Ps. vi, 3. The A.V. ("Disgrace") is very feeble.

Megiddo, that fatal Flodden Field of Jewish history, where the young king and the flower of his chivalry were mown down by the sword. If these indications are accepted as fixing the date of the foregoing oracles, then a peculiar emphasis is lent to the impassioned appeal of chap. xiv, 21: Break not Thy Covenant! The great event of Josiah's reign was, as we know, the Solemn League and Covenant, which had promised so much, and threatened now to end, with the king's death, in heartbreaking failure.

(III) With chap. xv, 10, we pass over into the second half of the section, reflecting a somewhat later stage, and dealing with more personal relations. Smitten by the desolation he sees around, and by the thought of the part, however passive, he has played in it, the prophet bewails his fate. Surely it were better to be childless than to have borne such a son as he! We realize the complete isolation in which he finds himself, the cessation of all friendly offices, and even of business relations. The only recognition he meets, is the curse flung after him as he moves along the street.

What follows is exceedingly difficult. The obscurity of the English version is explained by the hopeless corruption of the Hebrew text. It would serve no good purpose to recount the various efforts made to worry some kind of sense out of sheer nonsense. The rendering given above diverges from the received text at many points; if open to criticism on that account, it has one redeeming feature. It preserves a certain continuity throughout the passage. Let us begin with the reference in verse 12, to the "altar-shields." According to a tradition, preserved for us only in the latest stratum of the Pentateuch,<sup>1</sup> but which must have been current in

<sup>1</sup> See Numbers xvi, 36-40 (Hebrew text, xvii. 1-5), and compare Gray's *Numbers* (Internat. Critical Commentary).

priestly circles at an early date, and was no doubt familiar to the prophet, the great altar in the Temple court was plated with brass taken from the censers of Korah and those who perished with him before the Lord. These brazen shields witnessed at once to the sanctity of the altar and to the doom of those who sought to violate it. So it is, thinks the prophet, with the prayers of wicked men, which minister to their own condemnation. With himself it was otherwise. Cursed by men, he has blessed them in his heart ; and the fact that he has prayed for others, lends energy to the prayers he now offers for himself. He has indeed no doubt that help will come, but he fears lest it come too late (verse 15). In a phrase, hallowed by ancient and honoured use, he prays for an immediate, effective, and miraculous intervention, such as may extricate him from the desolation he sees around. Of Enoch, who walked with God, it is recorded : God took him. Twice in the Psalter we read, as the hope of the righteous : Thou shalt take me.<sup>1</sup> So here, on the prophet's lips. In pathetic language he pictures himself seated alone among a crowd (the worst kind of loneliness), having no taste for their mirth and no share in their prosperity, with the terrible burden of Jahveh's hand, the doom of a whole people, laid on him (verses 17-18). And again the question arises, What of Jahveh ? Why does He not send help ? Why is He like waters that fail ? The Drought that parched the land is reflected, once more, in the prophet's embittered spirit, where the springs of feeling and action are dried up. With all his splendid courage, there is a vein of weakness in him still. Because men have failed him, he attributes faithlessness to Jahveh as well.

<sup>1</sup> Psalm xlix, 15, and lxiii, 24.

Chap. xvi, 1-13 is taken, in substance at least, from the memorabilia of Baruch. The prophet is confirmed in his attitude of aloofness toward the people. "Thou shalt not take a wife, nor have son or daughter." Why should he add to the childless widows in the land, or to the long list of the slain? He must not even enter into the house of mourning or go to lament the dead. Doubtless he felt the wisdom of such a course. Absolute self-repression was his only safeguard in presence of such boundless sorrow. Meantime, the process of judgment went on, through the dark days that followed. The dead were so many that there was no place to bury them, nor any to mourn them. The decent rites of sepulture were discontinued. Like England under a Papal ban, without Bell or Book, Judah was cursed—only under far higher sanction. Joy like sorrow is forbidden: "Thou shalt not go to the house of feasting" (verse 9).

There is no need to read into such words anything of the nature of monastic celibacy. We have studied the preceding chapters to little purpose if we are not prepared to do justice to the genial humanity of the prophet. It was the interest with which he threw himself into the life of his people, that warned him, on occasion, to refrain. His protest is aimed, not so much against innocent and natural gaiety, as against those heathen rites which were tainting the springs of domestic and national life. The habit of tattooing and of feasting in presence of the dead,<sup>1</sup> were parts of the ways of the Gentiles on which loyalty to Jahveh forbad him to enter. In this, as in other respects, he finds his New Testament counterpart in the apostle

<sup>1</sup> "Nor shall one break bread to the mourner," etc. (verse 7). The preposition 'al (i.e. over) is used, because the mourner sat on the ground while the celebrant stood over him.

of the Gentiles. Beyond any other of the apostolic writings, St. Paul's letters are pervaded by a quick and expansive sympathy. Yet we know how, like Jeremiah, and for the same reason, he abstained from marriage—"for the present distress." He asserts his freedom as a Christian man, and yet is careful never to use it to the detriment of another: "I will not eat flesh nor drink wine while the world lasts, lest I cause my brother to offend."

[The second half of chap. xvi presents various critical difficulties. Verses 14, 15 contain a promise of Restoration which reads strangely at such a point, without any corresponding change in the temper of the people. Again, in verse 18 we have a "First" without any "Second" to follow it. Both difficulties disappear, if we transpose verses 14-15 and read them after verse 18. The threat of judgment is then continued from verse 13 into verse 16; while the promise of verse 18 is confirmed in verses 14, 15. In verses 19-21 contents and style indicate a post-Exilic origin; particularly the advent of the Gentiles, who are heard knocking at the city gates—not as foes, but as suppliants. Contrast chap. xii, 15, where they serve Jahve—"each in his own land."]

\*       \*       \*       \*       \*

Chap. xvii, 1-14 consists of a number of fragmentary and disjointed oracles. It is hardly possible to divine any principle of collocation in the Editors' mind.

Verses 1-4.

Verse 1. The sin of Judah is written

With an iron pen;

Graven on the table of their heart,

With the point of a diamond.

Verse 2. While their children bethink them of their altars,

And of their images,

Under the green tree and on hill-tops,

Ye woodland heights!

Verse 3. Thy substance and all thy treasures

Will I give as spoil.

Thy high places, even for all thy sins

In all thy borders,

Verse 4. And thou shalt withdraw from mine heritage  
Which I gave thee.

And I will make thee serve thine enemies  
In a land thou hast not known.

For a fire is kindled in My fury  
Which shall burn for ever.

Wrecked by the reforming zeal of Josiah's time, the ruins of the local shrines remained, a menace to the loyalty of a generation whose repentance was never more than skin-deep. "How oft the chance to do ill deeds makes ill deeds done!" The prophet bids them, in imagination, see their children climbing the grassy heights and stretching themselves under the spreading trees, while they recall the scenes they had witnessed in their youth. But how? With silent aversion—anticipating the condemnation of heaven, or condoning, and so confirming, the evil choice of their parents? Either way, the words have force. A man, if he has any heart, is wounded when he sees the pained surprise with which a child regards his wrong-doing. But the deepest wound is dealt when he sees the follies of his own youth reproduced and magnified in his children. And now, Jahveh will purge the land. The high places where the people had worshipped are given over to the enemy, so as themselves to serve as a kind of sin-offering within her borders. Meantime, the people shall go into exile. Every seventh year, according to the law, debts were cancelled and the fields lay fallow. But now the whole land shall "keep her sabbaths,"<sup>1</sup> and return to her rightful owner. The last divorce, as of soul from body, so of the people from the land, shall clear off old scores, and end the ancient controversy between Jahveh and Judah.

We must not too readily yield to despondence. By

<sup>1</sup> 2 Chron. xxxvi, 21.

the help of a graceful and charming figure the prophet invests with a semblance of reality his own ideal of what should be. Slightly amending the text, and transposing one or two of the clauses, we may render thus :

Veres 5-8.

Verse 5. Cursed be the man that trusteth in man  
And maketh flesh his arm.

Verse 6. For he shall not see when good cometh,  
But shall be as the heath in the desert.

And he shall dwell in a parched land in the wilderness,  
In a salt place not inhabited.

Verse 7. Blessed is the man that trusteth in Jahveh ;  
Jahveh is his confidence.

Verse 8. For he shall not see when heat cometh,  
And his leaf shall be green.

And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers,  
Sending forth his roots by the water courses.  
And, in the year of drought, he shall not wither,  
Nor cease from bearing fruit.

In poetic language, the heath is credited with the power of vision, wistful eyes that look for showers that never come. With shrivelled roots that cling to the barren rock, with leaves like scales that droop about its sapless stem—cut down for fuel, or cropped close by the starving goat, it is a fit emblem of the wicked.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the palm tree flourishes even in the desert, where its roots strike deep through the hot sand to the springs below. With stately growth and luxuriant beauty, with spreading shade and luscious fruits that tempt the hand and win the thanks of the passer-by, it is a fit emblem of the righteous. But where shall we find a fact that corresponds with this pious fancy. Not in man.

Verse 9. The heart is deceitful and diseased,  
Who can know it ?

<sup>1</sup> See Canon Tristram (*Natural History of the Bible*).

Verse 10. I, Jahveh, who search the heart,  
And try the reins.

There is no scientific verification for the figure that follows ; but popular fancy sanctions its use.

Verse 11. As a partridge sitting on eggs it has not laid ;  
So is a man making money but not in righteousness,  
In the midst of his days he must leave it,  
And in his latter end prove a fool.

From the thought of the sinner's end, the mind reverts to the great Beginning—Jahveh, the eternal defence of His people. The heights of Zion rise before us, crowned with the Holy City, and starred with Temple-towers.

Verse 12. A glorious throne ; an ancient high place, the place of our Sanctuary.

Verse 13. Jahveh, the Hope of Israel !  
All that forsake Thee come to shame.  
And they that turn from Thee are writ in dust,  
Forsaking the Fountain of living waters.

From time to time, we have seen the prophet dealing with his people, the stern censor of a corrupt age. Like Moses, when he speaks with others, he puts a veil over his face ; but here he is alone with Jahveh, and shows us himself. What he had taught others, often incidentally,<sup>1</sup> is seen to be of the essence of his own spiritual life. At the roots of his intensely ethical teaching, feeding the springs of his human sympathies and prophetic activities, we find this faith in a living God.

Jahveh is the “ Fountain of living waters.” To our Western mind it may seem as if justice had been done to the prophet's words, when we treat them as a figure ; as if he meant, by an analogy from Nature, to shew us

what God is in the Spiritual world. But the whole context, and, indeed, all we know of the working of the Eastern mind, forbids this shallow interpretation. When a Hebrew began to think about the world, he started with a broad and simple contrast between matter and spirit. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And the Spirit of Jahveh moved on the face of the waters." All forms of energy, light, order, motion, physical and moral life, were Spiritual, i.e. manifestations of the one Divine Spirit, which moved alike on the face of the deep and in the soul of man. To plunge into a cool stream in summer, to wander through the harvest fields, to look into the glowing heart of a sunset, to taste the sweetness and joy of human love, was to be brought face to face with God. So, when the rains failed and the rivers shrank within their blistered channels, it was not merely the loss of so much vital energy ; it was as if men saw Jahveh visibly withdrawing from the land. And when the wind rose and the showers fell, when the earth rejoiced once more, when the heart of man was stirred to penitence and praise ; then, in the flowing tide of vital energy which swept through all, they saw His return. Nature was not merely a symbol, but rather a sacrament, of that life which, one in all its many forms, centres, silent and never failing, in the heart of God. From this point of view a new light was shot athwart the sad experience of those parched and pulseless days. Drought on the land, Defeat on the field, Desolation in the heart, were so many steps that led men in on Life's fullness as it dwells in God. Certainly illusions are not delusions, if they lead us thus with ultimate Reality in God. The stream may fail ; the Fountain, never.

One summer morning, years ago, a restless Spirit

from Jahveh came on the present writer, and he started out for a long day among the hills. Leaving the valley behind him with its little homesteads nestling among cultured fields, he dived through a belt of larches where the deer lay couched, and emerged on the bare hill-side. Hour after hour he tramped the heather, starting again and again a covey of grouse that rose with a whirr and a cry that blended perfectly with the silence around. As he rose, the shoulder of the hill broke off suddenly, and dropped some hundreds of feet into what might have been the moraine of an ancient glacier. A patch of vivid green on the black front of the rock drew him like a magnet. As he approached, he heard that most musical of all sounds, the gurgling of water, and, pushing aside the thick grass that sheltered it, drank of the clearest and coolest of springs. All the vital energy of Nature seemed to be distilled into each crystal drop. The loneliness of the scene, the contrast between the surrounding desolation and the verdure and beauty, the intense life, which seemed to reign within the charmed circle, has made it for ever memorable. So are men like our prophet driven by sorrow, and drawn by love, to find in God the Fountain of life.

Matthew Arnold, in a beautiful little poem,<sup>1</sup> deals with an experience such as that described in these vivid chapters. He speaks of "the unregarded river of our life," that flows on through the deep recesses of the soul, hidden from others and often from ourselves. We think, we speak, we act, bravely and well—yet never wholly with success; never grasping the ultimate truth about our Life, never seeming to face our real selves. And then a moment comes—the touch of a hand, the glance of an eye will do it—when a bolt seems to be shot back,

<sup>1</sup> "The Buried Life."

And what we mean we say, and what we would we know.  
 The man becomes aware of his life's flow,  
 And hears its winding murmur ; and he sees  
 The meadow where it glides, the sun, the breeze.  
 And there arrives a lull in the hot race,  
 Wherein he doth for ever chase  
 That flying and illusive shadow, rest.  
 An air of coolness plays upon his face,  
 And an unwonted calm pervades his breast ;  
 And then he thinks he knows  
 The hills where his life rose,  
 And the sea where it goes.

Such a moment of discovery came to the prophet, no doubt, when, turning from the parched fields and his own desolate hearth, he faced God and found himself, saw the meaning of things, and tasted for one intense moment the blessedness of life.

\*       \*       \*       \*       \*

What follows (verses 14-18) is apparently a postscript.

Verse 14. Heal me, Oh, Thou Jahveh ;  
 So shall I be healed.

Save me, so shall I be saved ;  
 For Thou art my praise.

Verse 15. Behold, they keep saying to me,  
 Where is Jahveh's word ?

Verse 16. Yet I, I have not hastened  
 After evil at Thy hand.  
 The direful day desired not I.  
 Thou knowest it.

What I have spoken, I have spoken  
 As in Thy sight.

Verse 17. Be not to me as a Terror ;  
 Thou art my hope in th' evil day.

Verse 18. Let my persecutors be shamed, but not I ;  
 Let them be scared, but not I.  
 Bring on them the evil day,  
 Destroy them with double destruction.

In the English version verse 16 is rendered thus : I have not hastened from being a shepherd, to follow Thee. But we have no reason to believe that Jeremiah ever was a shepherd ; and the word is figuratively applied rather to the civil rulers of the people than to their teachers, so that we cannot understand it of his prophetic office. The verb in the original may be used actively or intransitively, i.e. of the shepherd or of the sheep. In this latter sense it is taken here by Hitzig. Though a pastor of the people, the prophet is himself one of Jahveh's sheep ; nor will he cease from following the true and only Shepherd, whatever men may say or do. But a glance at the original and a comparison of verse 16 with the close of verse 17 ("The evil day") suggests the interpretation given above. The verb to haste ('uç) is used of pressing a claim, either legal (as in Exod. v, 13) or moral (as in Gen. xix, 13). Here, of course, the claim is moral. The meaning then is ; I have not used my influence with Thee, to hasten the judgment with which Thou hast threatened them. So in the parallel clause : I have not desired the direful day.

The rest of the chapter deals with the question of Sabbath observance. Matter and style alike indicate its later post-Exilic origin.

## CRITICAL NOTES ON CHAPS. XIV-XVII

## Ch. xiv, verses 1-10.

Verse 2. The clause that stands last in the M.T. must be transposed to the beginning.

Verse 3a. Omit פָּתַח, in the first line, as anticipating the next couplet.

Verse 3b. Read Rēkîm, in appos. to Vessels. The close of the verse ("They are ashamed," etc.) is an anticipation of verse 4.

Verse 4a. "Lying untailed." Read צָבֹרָה, the preposition being privative; and compare LXX: καὶ τὰ ἔργα, etc.

Verse 4b. Read עַמְּנָנָה; the preposition being causal.

Verse 5. "Forsaketh her young"; literally, "Calveth and leaveth." Omit the phrase: "Because there is no grass," both here and in the following verse. It is merely explanatory.

Verse 6. Omit: "Like jackals." There is no force in the comparison of a wild ass to a jackal.

Verse 7. "Do Thou for us." The phrase has been amplified. First, in the LXX ("Do Thou for Thine own sake") and then in the M.T. ("Do Thou for Thy name's sake").

Verse 8b. Duhm objects to Gēr ("a stranger"), with right. But Gēr Ba'areq is probably a variant for the following עַמְּנָנָה, and to be omitted.

Verse 9b. Omit: "We are called by Thy name"—purely exegetical.

Verse 10b. "I have no pleasure, etc."—so the text must originally have read. It has been altered to suit the close of the verse, which is a quotation from Hos. viii. 15.

## Ch. xv, verses 5-9.

Verse 7. "They went forth, but returned not"; literally, "From their way, they return not." There is no ethical suggestion here.

Verse 8. "Anguish and dismay." See Driver's note.

Ch. xiv, verses 17b, 18.

Verse 17b. "Let them cease from weeping." The line in the original is defective, and may be supplemented so.

Verse 18c. Omit: "Into a land."

Verses 19-22.

Verse 20. Omit: "And of our fathers." To confess the sins of the fathers seems to have been the peculiar delight of post-Exilic writers.

Verse 19. The verse has been expanded. The original text can hardly be settled; at best a suggestion is made.

Ch. xv, verses 10-19.

Verse 10a. Omit: "And of strife"; and read: "To all the land," instead of (with our A.V.), "To all the earth." The egoism of the prophet was not so sublime as the Translators suppose.

Verse 10b. "Everyone of them curseth me." See Driver in his *Notes on Samuel* (Introduction, p. 30), also G. K. § 61h.

Verses 11-12.

Verse 11. For: "Thus saith Jahve," read (with the LXX): "Amen, Jahve." For: לֹא שָׁרוֹחַ, I propose to read Lôshantîm (cf. Ps. ci. 5, and cf. Prov. xxx, 10). Bring forward from next clause the phrase: "In an evil time" (omit the duplication of it, produced by uncertainty as to which of the two clauses it belongs to), and let L'êtôb (read Lâtôb) go to the second clause; (cf. LXX: ἐις ἀγαθόν πρὸς τὸν ἔχθρόν). Thus the verse will read:

אָמֵן וְהַנֶּה אָמֵן לֹשְׁנָתִים בַּעַת רָעָה אָמֵן לֹא הַפְּנָתִית בְּךָ לְטוֹב לְאַיִל:

For a similar parenthesis, compare Ps. vii. 4 and 5.

Verse 12. Most commentators agree that the LXX περιβόλαιον χαλκοῦ represents an original מִצְפֵּי נְחַשָּׁה at the close of the verse. Compare Exod. xxvii, 2, and Num. xvii, 1-4. (See Gray's *Numbers*; the passage belongs to P<sup>g</sup>). We might have expected a mention of the altar; but the reference is, on the prophet's part, tacit and understood. He was himself a priest.

And now, for the enigmatic: "Shall iron break iron?" I propose to read: בְּרִכָּה רְכָחָה חַתְּרָאָה—an easy alteration—which may be compared with chap. xiv, 12, a verse which, apparently, is based on it. For emphasis expressed by duplication, compare chap. ix, 5.

Verses 13-14. A later insertion from xvii, 1-4. They refer to the people, and break the train of thought.

Verse 15a. The opening words: "Thou knowest" have been inserted by a later hand to restore the connexion with verse 12, broken by verses 13-14.

Verse 15b. Instead of "In Thy longsuffering," read a verbal form, followed by the 2nd personal pronoun (al-ta'arek, attah). Read also: Ki Nasa'ti.

Verse 16. "Of those that despise Thy word"—recognized by all as the original text (following the LXX). Read also: Kallēm V'hayah ["Destroy them, and (thy word) shall be"].

Verse 19. "If thou wilt return," etc. The phrase may have been interpreted of the exile, and led to the insertion of the phrase: I will bring thee again.

#### Ch. xvii, verses 1-4.

Verse 1b. "And the horns of their altars" is a later addition—suggested by verse 2.

Verse 3. "Woodland heights" cannot be a reference to Jerusalem, but only to the hills, where the idolatrous worship was carried on.

Verse 3. "Even for all thy sins"; cf. the text, as given in chap. xv, 13, 14; and also the LXX.

Verse 4. In the A.V. this verse reads: "And thou, even thyself shalt continue." יְבָה is a corruption of יְדָה based on Deut. xv, 2, where however יְדָה is to be connected not with the verb, but with the noun immediately preceding it (see Driver *in loco*). It is to be omitted here.

#### Verses 5-8.

Verse 5. Omit: "Whose heart turneth from Jahve." What is thus said, has already been said in the previous clause.

Verse 6. Insert 'areq before "parched."

Verse 13. "All that forsake Thee"—altering the suffix,

if indeed, that is necessary (cf. G. K. § 87c). With "Writ in dust" compare: "Make dust our paper, and with rainy eyes write sorrow on the bosom of the earth." Many prefer to read: "Shall be ashamed on the earth."

Verse 16c. Transpose the subst. verb to the first half of the couplet.

## THE POTTER'S WHEEL

### CHAPTERS XVIII-XX

**I**T is evident on the surface, that these chapters must be grouped together; but we must go below the surface to learn how they are related, and what precisely is the message that they bring. In chap. xviii the prophet tells his own story, drawing his inspiration from the up-turned faces gathered round him, and making his appeal with passionate intensity and directness to the God who sent him. Chap. xix, on the other hand, is Editorial. The narrative is disjointed, and important points are overlooked or left to the imagination of the reader.<sup>1</sup> But at one place the narrative becomes pointed and significant. Verses 10 and 11 are confirmed by chap. xiii, 12-14, and, in turn, throw a fuller light on that passage, as also on a difficult phrase in chap. xxii, 28. In chap. xx Jeremiah is spoken of as "the prophet," and his sufferings at the hands of the people are narrated evidently by an onlooker. Yet at its close the note of direct and personal to Jahveh recurs.

Only one explanation is possible. Another hand than the prophet's has been at work, rescuing from oblivion some of his hitherto unpublished utterances, and, with the help of Baruch's Memorabilia, weaving

<sup>1</sup> E.g., the prophet's compliance with the Divine command (verse 3); so also, the filling of the bottle which is to be emptied (verse 7).

them loosely into connexion with their supposed origins and results.

Again, the tone of these chapters varies. Chap. xviii is largely hortatory—a call to repentance. In chaps. xix and xx, the tone is that of severe and uncompromising denunciation. Evidently the call to repentance has been in vain. In other words, chaps. xix and xx refer to a later date than chap. xviii. But how much later? The question is difficult. In the case of an individual, a single hour may witness a great spiritual crisis. The call comes; the temptation faces us; the same day that found us unformed and untried, leaves us with character fixed for life. But in the case of a people, such decisions are slowly formed. Truth must spread; the social conscience must be stirred; and that can be only with time. We are dealing here with a nation; and the difference between chaps. xviii and xix suggests an interval of years, from five to ten. This is borne out by a closer scrutiny of the chapters. In chap. xviii, where the call to repentance is emphasized, the coming judgment is sketched in language familiar to us, indefinite and figurative.<sup>1</sup> In chap. xx, all is swift, concise, and realistic; the Babylonian captivity is foretold. That is to say, chap. xviii dates, probably, from the reign of Jehoahaz; chaps. xix and xx belong to the later years of Jehoiakim.

Along two lines of thought the prophet has been moving slowly but surely, toward results, each in its own way indisputable and final, and yet apparently irreconcilable. In the first place, he has been forced to admit that the tendency to evil in his people is

<sup>1</sup> See verses 13-17.

not only deeply rooted, but ineradicable.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, his experience of life confirms him in the faith of Jahveh as all-sufficient for man's spiritual need.<sup>2</sup> But how these conclusions stand related; how He can suffice for all, who fails for any; how, face to face with the facts of life and history, one can still think of Him as infinitely great and good, the prophet might well find it hard to say. Yet a man has this misfortune, in which of all God's creatures he stands alone, that he is intolerant of contradictions, cannot rest in that which is assuredly good, so long as it is menaced by that which as certainly is evil. Sometime, somehow, the question must be faced, and, if possible, answered. According to the temper of the man and the age, it is raised here, not in the abstract, but in the concrete; and receives such solution as is possible, not by way of formal conclusion but of suggestion, in a figure—that of the potter and the clay.

The prophet is bidden to go down into the valley of Hinnom, to the Potter's House, i.e. the great factory of earthenware vessels, with the promise that the word of Jahveh shall meet him there. He is not disappointed. As he moves along, his eye rests upon a potter busy at his work. A handful of clay is taken from the bed and laid on the wheel, and swiftly the outline of a vessel appears. But the clay is knotted. It refuses to yield to the pressure of his hand. The vessel is broken on the wheel.<sup>3</sup> Arrested by this sight, the prophet awaits the result.

<sup>1</sup> Compare xiii, 23 and xvii, 9.

<sup>2</sup> Compare xvii, 13.

<sup>3</sup> In verse 4 the text reads: "The vessel which he made was marred *as clay in the hands of the potter*. The italicized words are borrowed from verse 6. They are not in the LXX.

The potter takes the lump of clay and, thrusting it back into the bed, kneads it again, smoothing out the knots, and then, replacing it on the swift revolving wheel, fashions a vessel, "as it seemed good to the potter," i.e. satisfactory to the eye of a professional artist. It was the triumph of mind over matter, of patience and skill over unfavourable conditions. In a moment, light dawns on the prophet's mind. In that commonplace event, he has found his philosophy of life. "The word of Jahveh" had come to him. God is sovereign in history; more so than the potter over his clay. For, while the latter accepts his material, the former creates it. Yet the sovereignty of God is subject to limits which He has Himself imposed. He has given to man the mysterious gift of freedom, the power to negative the proposals of Omnipotence. If man will not, God cannot. What then of sovereignty in God? Much; infinite patience and boundless resource, the power to bear and forbear, to make and unmake, to apply all possible considerations and expedients so as to soften the heart and subdue the will. And then? Frankly and fearlessly, let us face the conclusion as the prophet does. The issue rests with man.

The Jewish nation had been dominated by a strange and fatal delusion. They thought that, as they were the Covenant people, their future was secure. They might do as they pleased, be what they liked; Jahveh was bound to them. His honour was involved with the fortunes of the city and the people that were called by His name. What the prophet impresses on them is this, that the relation in which they stood to Jahveh was moral; that the blessings of the Covenant, while in themselves secure, were conditioned by man's fitness to receive them; in other words,

by conformity to Jahveh's will. On this truth he bases the appeal of verse 11: "Turn ye now, every one, from his evil way."<sup>1</sup> The call to repentance is enforced by a brief and charming passage, poetic in form, in which, after his wont, the prophet draws on Nature to rouse all that is best in man, contrasting the permanence of the one with the fickleness of the other.

Verse 13. Ask now among the nations, and see,  
 Who hath heard such things as these ?  
 A very horrible thing hath been done  
 By the Virgin of Israel.

Verse 14. Fails from the lofty peak,  
 The snow of Lebanon ?  
 Or do the wet winds from the sea dry up,  
 That blow in coldly ?

Verse 15. For my people hath forgotten Me,  
 Burning incense to no-gods.  
 And they have stumbled out of ancient paths,  
 In ways not traversed ;

Verse 16. To lay utterly waste their land,  
 A perpetual hissing.  
 All that pass by are amazed at it.  
 And shake their heads.

Verse 17. As with an east wind will I scatter them  
 Before the enemy.  
 I will turn them my back and not my face,  
 In the day of their calamity.

In a hot climate like that of Palestine, snow is seldom seen, and never lies save in the highlands. Only on the heights of Lebanon do you reach the line beyond which the snow never melts. The brooks

<sup>1</sup> Verses 7-11 are a later addition, in which the principle of the Divine Sovereignty is extended beyond Judah to the Gentile nations. Here, it serves rather to blunt the edge of the warning. Connect verse 6 directly with verse 11. Also Editorial is verse 12. For the incident, Baruch is no doubt the authority.

and wadys of the desert, fed by uncertain showers, are dried up by the summer's heat ; but the great rivers, whose springs are among the mountains and fed by eternal snows, flow on without intermission. It might have been so with Jahveh's people. God entered the people's life as a mountain pierces the cloud, to make all the good that was latent in them conscious and articulate. As the mist and the snow wreath the sides of the mountain that gave them birth, He had drawn them to Himself, that they might rest in Him. Fed by the springs of His perennial goodness, the stream of their national life need never have failed. But they had forgotten Him, and burned incense to Baal. Again, no feature of the Syrian climate is more remarkable than the part played by the West Wind. Blowing in from the sea, and laden with moisture, it tempers the burning heat and scatters showers over the thirsty land. " Those who have not travelled through a Syrian summer can scarcely realize how welcome, how unfailing a friend is the forenoon wind from the sea ; how he is strongest just after noon, and does not leave you till the need for his freshness passes away with the sunset." <sup>1</sup> Unlike the West Wind, so constant and beneficent in its action, the people had veered round, and turned away from Jahveh. Fitful and passionate, their breath was like the sirocco, the dry wind blowing from the East, and the land withered under it (verse 17).

In the close of the chapter this is brought out, not subjectively, in the judgment of the prophet, but objectively, and by definite action on the part of the people. To such appeals they have no answer to make, but a scornful silence. They will strike at the man, so as to silence his message.

<sup>1</sup> G. A. Smith, *Hist. Geography*.

Ch. xviii, ver. 18. And they said, Come, and let us devise  
 Devices against him.  
 For the law shall not perish from the priest,  
 Nor counsel from the wise.

Verse 19. Hearken unto me, O Jahveh,  
 And hear my pleading cry

Verse 20. Shall evil be repaid for good ?  
 Remember my standing before Thee,  
 To speak good on their behalf,  
 To turn away Thy wrath.

Verse 20. Give their sons to the famine.  
 Deliver them to the power of the sword.  
 Let their wives be widowed,  
 And their men slain of the sword.

Verse 22. Let a cry be heard in their dwellings,  
 When Thou bringest on them, sudden, the  
 foe.  
 For they have digged a pit to take me,  
 And hidden snares to catch my feet.

Verse 23. But Thou, Jahveh, knowest  
 All how they plot to slay me.  
 Forgive not their transgressions,  
 Nor blot out their sins from before Thee.  
 Let them be cast out from Thy presence.  
 Deal Thou with them in Thy time of fury.

In chap. xix the situation is materially altered. Once again the prophet finds himself in the valley, not now where the potters are at work, but a little aside, at the Sherd Gate, where the waste fragments of pottery and the rubbish of the city were shot out. This change of place subtilely reflects itself in a change of tone.

Instead of a call to repentance, there is a note, solemn and impressive, of impending doom. The element of Freedom disappears. There is now no thought of patient toil, triumphing over difficulties.

The work is done; the formative process is over. We are dealing with results, finished for good or evil. All relations between Jahveh and His people are broken off, but one—the last. Taking a vessel in his hand, and filling it, the prophet tilts it over and empties it with a gulping noise. “So will I empty (i.e. pour out) and confound the counsel of Judah.” Here, where He would have fashioned them to some noble end, had they not refused, Jahveh will cause them to fall. Then, breaking the bottle and scattering the fragments among the rubbish at his feet, he foretells a time, close at hand, when the valley, now a scene of cheerful industry, shall be a vast burial ground.<sup>1</sup>

It is probable that by this time the prophet's influence was largely gone. Few followed him or waited for his word, as of old. He has to procure his own slender audience,<sup>2</sup> who listen to him listlessly and without any comment. With a terrible tenacity he finds his way back to the city and the Temple courts, and there in the hearing of all, repeats his message. For a second time,<sup>3</sup> and more acutely

<sup>1</sup> Duhm rejects xix, 1-xx, 6. From this condemnation, Erbt excepts xix, 1-2, and verse 11; also xix, 14-xx, 6. It is, of course, certain that, in its present form the text is Editorial; but I am disposed to regard it as, like chap. xviii, substantially a reproduction of some narrative from Baruch. For example, I note the play on the noun (*Bakbuk*=a bottle), and the verb *Bakak* (to pour) in verse 7. That there was something in the original documents to correspond with this, is indicated by a passage already commented on (xiii, 12-14)—evidently another version of the same incident. In the same way, I take it that an original record is reproduced here, in its original connexion if not in its original form, in verses 12, 13. On this, as we know, is based the Editorial passage, vii, 32-34.

<sup>2</sup> “Take with thee the elders of the people,” etc.

<sup>3</sup> See chap. xxvi.

than before, he finds himself in conflict with the Temple authorities. Offended by his freedom, Pashhur, son of Immer,<sup>1</sup> chief officer of the Temple, an arrogant and high-minded ecclesiastic, has him laid up in the stocks. Night passes in bitter silence over the angry prophet ; but, with the morning, when, they release him from his painful and undignified confinement, all the vials of his wrath are broken over the haughty priest. No more shall he be called Pashhur but Magor-Missabib —“Terror take thee” ;<sup>2</sup> Jahveh shall make thee a terror to thyself and to all thy friends. This sharp conflict, with one of the highest ecclesiastical

<sup>1</sup> Pashhur is designated as chief overseer (Pākīd Nāgīd) of the Temple. In lii, 24 the officials of the Temple are enumerated thus : The High Priest, the Deputy High Priest, and three Keepers of the Threshold. These last were probably the same as the Pekidim of whom one was Nāgīd, or Chief. This was the office held by Pashhur. Zephaniah, mentioned in xxix, 26 as also a Pakīd, may have been a colleague of Pashhur. The alternative is to suppose that the Pakīd Nāgīd was the same as the Deputy High Priest ; in which case, after Pashhur's transference to Babylon, Zephaniah may have succeeded him in this high office (lii, 24). But of course this is problematic. There seems, however, no ground for Duhm's assertion that there is no room for Pashhur in the Temple records of the time. See Erbt's Note.

<sup>2</sup> The meaning of the name Pashhur is doubtful. Gesenius derives it from Arabic roots meaning (a) prosperity and (b) around. Ewald connects it rather with the Hebrew root Pūsh, in the sense of joy (cf. Malach. iv, 2). Erbt, on the other hand, connects it with the root (Pāsach (s interchanging with sh). In Magor-Missabib—(LXX *παροικον*)—he rejects the Missabib entirely, and connects Magor (read, Māgūr) with Magar=to hand over. The meaning then is that, instead of being one over whom trouble passes, he shall find himself one “given over” to it. Against this (ingenious) explanation, is the fact that Magor-Missabib seems a recurring phrase with our prophet, and that this passage seems meant to explain its origin.

authorities in the city, meant much for the prophet, who was himself a priest. Political events, too, had been developing rapidly of late. A great battle on the Euphrates had wrecked the military power of Egypt, and the star of Nebuchadrezzar, the young Babylonian king, was in the ascendant. Yielding to these indications of Providence, he speaks out with a startling clearness. "Thus saith Jahveh, I will give all Judah into the hands of the king of Babylon, and he shall carry them captive to Babylon, and shall slay them with the sword. Moreover I will give all the riches of this city and all the gains thereof, and all the precious things thereof, yea, all the treasures of the kings of Judah into the hands of their enemies, who shall spoil them and take them and carry them to Babylon. And thou Passhur, and all that dwell in thy house, shall go into captivity, and thou shalt come to Babylon, and thou shalt die there, and be buried there." Babylon! The name of evil omen flashes from the prophet's burning lips, while every face grows pale with terror. At last, they know the meaning of all those solemn warnings which, for a quarter of a century, have invested their city with vague terrors. At last, they are face to face with final issues.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Erbt (as of course, Duhm) rejects verses 4-6, chiefly on the idea that the incident belongs to an earlier period, before the fourth year of Jehoiakim, and was indeed the cause of the prophet's exclusion from the Temple Courts (see xxxvi, 5). He thinks that, during Jehoiakim's reign, the prophet lived in retirement. But this is to assume too much—specially in face of xiii, 20-27 which belongs to the later years of Jehoiakim. His exclusion from the Temple was probably only temporary. If the passage before us belongs to the period after the fourth year of Jehoiakim—as the treatment meted out to the prophet leads us to believe, then there is no reason why it may not be, in substance, authentic.

Exhausted by the nervous strain of such a conflict, the prophet is supposed to relapse into a despondent and pathetic mood. Far behind him lies his youth, the sweet spring morning with its bright promise, when the almond blossomed, and he went forth full of hope, to speak for Jahveh. The glow of summer, and the wealth of autumn, that then tempted him forward, have given place to this bitter isolation that lies like winter on his soul. He utters a cry, as of one who suffers violence. It is impossible with any certainty to date the passage. We give it, as in the original omitting those verses which are probably Editorial.

Verse 7. Jahveh, Thou hast enticed me, and I yielded.  
           Thou art mightier than I, and hast prevailed.  
           I have been a jest all the day long.  
           Every one of them mocketh me.  
           For, as often as I speak, it is to cry :  
           " Murder ! Damnation ! "

Verse 8. For the word of Jahveh is become to me  
           A reproach and a taunt.

Verse 9. Then I said, I will not mention it,  
           Nor any longer speak.  
           But it was in my heart as a fire burning,  
           Shut up in my bones.

Verse 10. For I heard the whispering of many ;  
           " Inform ! Let us inform against him."  
           For all my friends watch at my side ;  
           " Perchance we may entice him,  
           And so prevail against him, taking  
           Our revenge on him."

Verse 11. But Jahveh shall be on my side  
           A dread-inspiring champion.  
           Therefore my persecutors shall stumble,  
           And shall not prevail.  
           Greatly shamed, they shall have endless confusion,  
           For they deal not wisely.

Thus, like a stream, chafed by rocks, but swelled

by rains that feed the mountain springs, rising in its bed till, calm and unbroken, it sweeps every hindrance before it, all the manhood of the prophet is roused, and his faith in God triumphs. But again there is a relapse (verses 14-18). Critics have rejected this closing stanza, or at least transposed it,<sup>1</sup> as being in its present position psychologically improbable. But it is hard to follow the heart in its wild wandering, or to say what may, and what may not, be expected of it. We have endeavoured to reproduce the measure of this short piece, irregular as it is. Undoubtedly we see the prophet at his lowest here.

Verse 14.

Woe worth the day  
On which my life began  
The day my mother bore me,  
No good betide it.

Verse 15.

Woe worth the man,  
Who brought my father tidings,  
Saying, a man-child is born thee.  
Gladd'ning him greatly.

Verse 16. For he shall be as the cities destroyed,  
Without pity, by Jahveh.  
And shall hear an alarm at morn,  
And the din of battle at noon.

Verse 17. Because he stifled me not in the womb.  
So had my mother been my grave,  
And her womb ever big with me.

Verse 18. Why thus did I come forth from the womb,  
To find travail and toil ?  
So that my days take end in shame ?

Looking back on these chapters we realize, not only the supreme importance of the theme, but the consummate wisdom of the treatment it receives. If you wish to know the peculiar temper which is at once

<sup>1</sup> So Ewald, who inserts it before verses 7-13.

the product and the proof of inspiration, you have only to read these chapters, and compare the wise restraint and fine balance of opposing truths which they discover, with the extravagant and absolute conclusions as to our relations with the Divine to which, unaided and uncontrolled, the mind of man has arrived. Few of us have room within our mental horizon, for more than one side of a complex truth. Either we regard God as the highest creation of the human intellect, necessary to the aesthetic completeness of life, but with an influence which is only reflex and subjective, or we invest Him with a sole reality, and discount ourselves as mere puppets—vanishing shadows, cast by the eternal substance on the screen of Time. In the one case, we have no appeal from life's failures ; in the other case, the motive power of action is largely gone. Here, on the contrary, we have Sovereignty—but moral Sovereignty, conserving the freedom which itself has given.

It is of the utmost importance that this great question should be viewed from the right point of view. We cannot, in our thoughtful hours, wholly dismiss the idea of divine sovereignty. In Nature the Reign of Law is absolute. Social science gains in importance every day, as our experience of human nature grows. A man is largely the product of his physical antecedents. One man is born to be an artist ; another man, to be a criminal. Each man has his doom stamped on his brow. If there be any uncertainty as to the issue, it is due to the action of environment, which may retard or accelerate what still remains as inevitable. Whether we speak of Fortune, with a smile, or of Fate, with a shudder, we mean the same thing—the element of necessity which pervades our lives ; blind, irrational, inevitable

necessity, gripping us as in a vice, and grimly negativing all hope of resistance. We see the whirring wheel to which our lives are bound ; we do not see the hand that turns it, or stays it at our cry. We transfer to the wheel the defects of the clay ; to God, the failures for which we should blame ourselves. Dark and hopeless, or at best sadly submissive, our lives lie under the shadow projected by a fatal misconception of what is meant by sovereignty in God. It is otherwise with the prophet. From the wheel, he looks up into the Potter's face ; behind the hand that moves all, he sees the heart that plans all. For him, divine sovereignty means not iron system but the patient goodness and boundless resource of One in whom, whatever happens, he can trust.

It can never be anything but stimulating to remember that there is One who, as the potter gives shape and beauty to the clay, breathes into our souls His eternal Spirit, makes us all we are not, and never can be of ourselves ; One who takes the fragments of a life into His hand, and refashions them to purpose and use. In his speculative moods St. Paul could entangle himself in the meshes of a Religious Philosophy of which one of his brother-apostles plaintively remarks, that "there are things in it hard to be understood and easily wrested." But in moments of intense personal experience, we know how he narrows the issue to a single point of which he was well assured : "I was before a persecutor and a blasphemer and injurious ; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." That was the triumph of sovereign grace. Neither can it be anything but wholesome to realize that the sovereignty of God has its own appointed limits ; that He has given us freedom, and cannot ignore, or revoke, the supreme gift with

which He has crowned our lives. He cannot save us against our will. A man may be enriched with the highest mental gifts ; yet, if he will not work hard and cultivate these, nothing will come of them. The Gospel brings the possibility of eternal happiness within reach of all ; but, if there is no response of faith on our part, the possibility will never be realized. Nay, we may be Christian men and women, who have put ourselves into God's hand that He may use us ; and yet a fault of temper, a little waywardness of thought or speech, easily condoned by ourselves, because, on the whole, we mean well, because, in fact, we are Christians, may be the marring of God's purpose for our lives. The history of the chosen people may be a warning to us here.

We may, however, nay, we must, go a step further. There is an element of finality in life. There is a point when discipline ends, and God takes a man, as he is, not for probation but for judgment. When, or where,<sup>that point is reached we dare not say of others,</sup> seeing we scarcely know it of ourselves. But always we must keep it in view as a dread possibility which may be nearer to us than we think. Now if, under any circumstances, it is conceivable that final failure should be the result—what then of the divine sovereignty ? Perhaps we are too sensitive in this connexion. God is great enough to fail. He has failed in the past ; He is failing every day. He cannot escape the risk of failure, so long as He has to deal with free intelligences in a state of probation. No passage in Scripture is so pathetic as that which records our Lord's final departure from the Temple courts. How often had He come there, as boy and man, to worship and to work ! How often had He looked into the wistful faces of the men and women that thronged

past Him, and thought of the weary hearts that lay behind, and would have gathered them ; but they would not. Now, His work is done ; He will go His way and leave them to themselves. Slowly the sun sets ; the evening lights linger on the Temple towers ; the solemn hush of twilight falls over the busy city, as He moves away into the deepening gloom, into the shadow of the cross. "I would, and ye would not." It was the greatest failure in history ; but we know what came of it. For it was Love that failed ; and Love's failures are Life's triumphs.

## CRITICAL NOTE ON CHAPS. XVIII-XX

## Ch. xviii. verses 13-17.

Verse 13. "Ask now among the nations (and see)."

The line is defective, and may be supplemented thus.

Verse 14. "The lofty peak." Literally, Rock of the plain. Cornill, Duhm, and others prefer to alter the text and read: "Sirion," one of the peaks of Lebanon; but, so closely followed by the more general Lebanon, this is not probable. "The wet winds from the sea"; reading (with Cornill), Miyyam; and then, instead of Zārim, reading M<sup>c</sup>zārim (cf. Job xxxvii, 9) used of the winds that scatter rain. "That blow in coldly"; for this use of Nôz̄lîm compare Canticles iv, 6, where the same verb is used of flowers breathing fragrance.

Verse 15. "They have stumbled"; read Niph'al. Omit: "From their ways," as exegetical of the unfamiliar (Aramaic) phrase which follows (שְׁבִילֵי עַזְלָם). Omit also: Lâleketh Nethîboth.

## Verses 18-20.

Verse 18. Read: Against him, instead of: Against Jeremiah.

Verse 19. "Thy pleading cry" instead of: My adversary.

Verse 20. Omit the clause: "For they have digged a pit for my soul"; borrowed from v. 22. A single clause is omitted at the close of verse 21 as a repetition of verse 21a.

## Ch. xx, verses 7-12.

Verse 8. Omit: I cry out; also, at the close of the verse: All the day.

Verse 9. "I will not mention it"; the suffix refers to Jahveh's word.

In verse 10 omit the phrase: "Terror take thee on every side," which suggests that the prophet's words to Pashhur are now flung back on himself!

Verse 11. "For they deal not wisely." The phrase must originally have stood at the close of the verse. When "Never to be forgotten" was introduced as exegetical of: Everlasting confusion, it was displaced.

## Verses 12 and 13 are Editorial.

For the Tenses in vv. 17-18 see Driver's *Hebrew Tenses*, § 74.

## KINGS AND PROPHETS

### CHAPTERS XXI-XXIII

PASSING over chap. xxi which, in the main, belongs to a later period, and will be considered in connexion with the Fall of Jerusalem, we come to a new section, which may be divided thus: chpp. xxii-xxiii, 8; and chap. xxiii, 9-39.

Chap. xxii, 1-chap. xxiii, 8. Concerning the Kings; actual kings, known to the prophet, and the true ideal King, as conceived, not indeed by him, but by those influenced by him, who carried on his work; such is the theme of this half of the section. It contains a considerable Editorial element, but, embedded in it, are several Jeremian oracles of great interest and importance.

Chap. xxii, 1-5. An address to the King's House. Judging by its tone, and by the call to repentance which it sounds, this oracle, if Jeremian, must date from early in the reign of Josiah. It was, no doubt, accepted by the Editor as an appeal to the Royal Household to support the young king in the administration of justice according to the new Constitution. But the style makes its origin doubtful.

Chap. xxii, 6-7. This is certainly a Jeremian oracle, the severity of which obliges us to date it somewhat late—certainly later than the reign of Josiah.

Ch. xxii, verse 6. As Gilead art Thou to me,  
And as the top of Lebanon.

I will surely make thee a wilderness,  
Cities not inhabited.

Verse 7. And I will enrol against thee destroyers,  
                  The man and his weapon;  
                  And they shall fell the choicest of the cedars,  
                  Flinging them on the fire.

Ch. xxi, v. 13. Behold, I am against thee, saith Jahveh.  
                  Inhabitress of the valley!  
                  Who sayest, Who shall come down against us?  
                  Who shall come into our dwellings?

Verse 14. And I will visit you, saith Jahveh,  
                  According to the fruit of your deeds.  
                  And will kindle fire on the forest,  
                  Which shall devour all about her.

[We have ventured to add to the oracle, as given above, the closing verses of chap. xxi. In their present position, the figurative language in which they are expressed is scarcely intelligible. Particularly, the reference, in verse 14, to the firing of the forest seems meaningless in connexion with the King's house, to which they are addressed. Here, on the other hand, they find some sort of justification in xxii, 6, where the Royal House is compared to Gilead and Lebanon, with their stately oaks and cedars. Falling from this, their original, connexion, the verses were inserted at the close of chap. xxi, an introduction being borrowed from chap. xxii, 1-5. But this is of course conjectural.]

Chap. xxii, 10-12. Concerning Shallum. We have here the first of the oracles of the Kings; and from this point forward, the chronological order is maintained.

Ch. xxii, v. 10. Weep not for the dead, nor bemoan him.  
                  For the exile, rather, weep.  
                  For he shall no more return, nor see  
                  The land of his nativity.

Instead of mourning the untimely death of Josiah, the prophet feels inclined to mourn the harder fate of his exiled son Shallum, or Jehoahaz, who held the throne of Judah for three critical months after his

father's death. Preferred by the people to his elder brother, either because of his more genial disposition or because of his anti-Egyptian leanings, he was speedily deposed by the victorious Necho, and brought down to Egypt where he died. A lingering hope of his return seems to have been cherished by some, who would still have preferred him to the despotic Jehoiakim. But the prophet gives no countenance to this fond hope.

Chap. xxii, 13-19. Concerning Jehoiakim, elder brother of Shallum. The eleven years of this reign were marked by a steady relapse into idolatry. The king's relations with our prophet were unfriendly from the first. Affecting "le grand Monarque," Jehoiakim lived in a style far above his means. It is probable that the artistic revival which marked his reign (verse 14), was widely noised abroad. But there was another side to this. The land was under tribute to Egypt; a heavy yearly impost drained the Treasury and burdened the people, already poor enough. Forced labour, loans not repaid, judicial murders, and the confiscation of goods which followed ecked out a diminished exchequer. The prophet protests against this abuse of power. With a touch of grim humour, he contrasts the superficial splendour of Jehoiakim, seen against a dark background of famine and pestilence, with the solid comfort and homely virtues of Josiah's reign (verse 15).

Verse 13. Woe to him who builds a house unrighteously,  
And chambers by injustice.

Who makes his subjects toil for nought,  
Withholding their hire;

Verse 14. Who saith, I will build me a spacious mansion,  
And roomy chambers,  
With wide windows and panelled with cedar,  
Staining it with vermillion.

Verse 15. Wilt play the king, because thou viest  
                   With thy father in cedar work?  
                   Did not he eat and drink?  
                   Then was it well with him.

Verse 16. He judged the poor and the needy; was not this  
                   To know Jahveh?

Verse 17. But thou hast no eyes nor any heart  
                   Save for thy gains;  
                   And for the blood of the innocent, to shed it;  
                   And for oppression, to do it.

\*      \*      \*      \*

Verse 18. They shall not mourn for him, alas, my brother!  
                   And, alas, my sister!  
                   They shall not mourn for him, alas, my lord!  
                   And, alas, his glory!

Verse 19. With burial of an ass thou shalt be buried—  
                   Torn and thrown out.

Chap. xxii, 22-23. Concerning the Land. At the time of Jehoiakim's death, Syria was overrun by the Chaldeans. The prophet, addressing Judah, bids her climb the loftiest heights within her reach, and there bewail the friends and lovers of her youth, i.e. the neighbouring nations, already reaping the bitter fruit of their restless efforts after independence. Instead of "friends" (Rē'îm) the M.T. reads: "Shepherds" (Rō'îm); and this has led to the application of the oracle to the Rulers of Judah. But they could not well be described as "Lovers" of the Land that gave them birth; and the wailing on Lebanon and Abarim, far beyond the borders of Judah, must refer to calamities descending, not on her, but on the neighbouring nations.

Verse 20. Get thee up on Lebanon, and cry;  
                   On Bashan raise thy voice.  
                   And cry from Abarim; for ruined  
                   Are all thy lovers.

Verse 21. I spake to thee in thy prosperity,  
 But thou saidst, I will not hear.  
 So hath it been, even from thy youth up ;  
 Thou hast not hearkened to my voice.

Verse 22. The wind shall shepherd all thy friends, and thy  
 lovers  
 Shall go into captivity.  
 Yea, then thou shalt be ashamed and confounded  
 Because of all thy wickedness.

Verse 23. Oh, thou that dwellest on Lebanon,  
 Making thy nest 'mong the cedars,  
 How shalt thou groan, when pangs come on thee ;  
 The pangs of a woman in travail.

Chap. xxii, 24-30. In the close of the chapter are preserved two fragments of an oracle concerning Coniah (Jehoiachin), the son of Jehoiakim, whose brief reign has already been alluded to ;<sup>1</sup> with certain insertions and additions from an Editorial hand.

Verse 24. As I live, it is the oracle of Jahveh,  
 Even if Coniah were  
 A signet upon my right arm,  
 From thence would I pluck him.

Verse 28. Is he a broken bottle, or a vessel  
 That none desireth ?  
 Why is he tossed, and thrown out  
 On a land he knoweth not ?

Coming to the throne as a minor, Jehoiachin was dominated by the Queen-Mother during his brief and tragic reign. It was natural that, after the intolerable despotism of Jehoiakim, the people should welcome any change. The youth and noble carriage of Jehoiachin seem to have fascinated them. They took him to their hearts, proud of him, as a man is proud of the costly jewel he wears. But he followed in his father's steps, and shared his fate. The storm which Jehoiakim had conjured up, broke over his

<sup>1</sup> Chap. xiii, 18.

son. The young king and the Queen-Mother were swept away in a whirlwind of ruin.

[We have here another example of the way in which Editorial notes blend with the original prophetic text. Between verse 24 and verse 28 is inserted the following prose passage, manifestly an amplification of verse 28 : " And I will give thee into the hand of them that seek thy life, and into the hand of them of whom thou art afraid, and into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar, King of Babylon, and into the hand of the Chaldeans. And I will toss thee, and the mother that bare thee, on to another land where ye were not born, and ye shall die there ; and they shall not return to the land whither their soul desireth to return."]

And again at the close of verse 28, the following passage has been added : " Oh, earth, earth, earth, hear the word of Jahveh. Thus saith Jahveh. Write this man childless, a man who shall not prosper in his days. For no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting on the throne of David and ruling still in Judah." As far as our prophet is concerned, Jehoiachin disappears from history when he goes into exile. It remained for a later generation, interested possibly in dynastic questions and royal pedigrees, to perpetuate the curse on the unfortunate king, even after death ; and to write him, thus, " childless on the earth." ]

Chap. xxii, 1-8. This passage contains fragments depicting the ideal king, and the age of prosperity which should begin for Judah with his reign. In substance there is nothing here which our prophet might not have written ; and the play on the royal names might be regarded as evidence of its pre-Exilic and prophetic authorship. All that the actual king (Zedekiah) had not been, the ideal king (Jahveh-Zidkenu,) should be. But, on the whole, the evidence is in favour of a later post-Exilic age.

In verses 1-4 Jahveh deals with the faithless shepherds or rulers. These men were the prototypes of Milton's " Blind mouths, that scarce know how to hold a sheep-hook " ; only Milton, with less than his usual accuracy, applies the phrase to the clergy of his day.

According to the oracle, Jahveh Himself shall supersede these unworthy hirelings, and take into His own hands the government of the flock. There are references here to iii, 15-16, which is, as we have seen, a post-Exilic passage. In verses 5, 6, the true king is sketched, the righteous Branch. In Hebrew the word used (Cemah = Branch) is usually collective (Fruitage);<sup>1</sup> and so Graf takes it here, i.e. of the whole company of the faithful shepherds. But if so, we should expect the verbs which follow to be plural instead of singular. The collective term has already received an individual and personal reference.<sup>2</sup> The name of the Messianic King shall be "Jahveh, our Righteousness." Righteousness is often, particularly in the later books of the Old Testament, combined with such ideas as Peace, Blessing, or, as here, Salvation. Hence Graf identifies the idea of Righteousness with that of Salvation.<sup>3</sup> But while they are clearly connected, the former gives prominence to ethical conditions of which the latter is the natural outcome. What we have here is a promise of material prosperity, delivered from a foreign yoke, and a free development of their national life, to be wrought out for the people by the ideal King, in whom the will of God shall be perfectly realized.

Verses 7-9. Here, the restoration of the scattered members of the body politic is the theme. The passage has already been met with in a connexion which confirms our judgment in favour of its post-Exilic origin.<sup>4</sup>

Chap. xxiii, 9-39. The rest of chap. xxiii is an

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Isa. iv. 3. <sup>2</sup> No doubt based on Zech. iii. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Stehend einfach als gleichbedeutend.

<sup>4</sup> Chap. xvi, 14-15.

Oracle concerning the Prophets, partly in poetic form and partly in prose. The long prose passage (verses 15-39) is of uncertain origin. There is nothing to definitely connect it with Jeremiah. On the other hand, the level of thought is much higher than that of the ordinary Editorial insertion; and, indeed, nothing in the whole book is more worthy of careful consideration than this.

The following are two poetic fragments, evidently Jeremian.

(Concerning the Prophets.)

Verse 9. My heart is broken within me.

    All my bones shake.

    I am as a man who is drunk,  
        O'ercome with wine.

Verse 10. For the land mourneth because of them;

    The desert pastures wither.

    And the way they take is evil.  
        Their course is not right.

Verse 11. For both prophet and also priest

    Are utterly profane.

    And also in my house I have seen  
        Their wickedness, saith Jahveh.

Verse 12. Therefore shall their way be, to them,

    As slippery places.

    In darkness shall they be driven on,  
        And fall therein.

    For I will bring calamity upon them  
        The year of their visitation.

\*      \*      \*      \*      \*

Verse 13. I have seen folly in the prophets;

    They prophesy by Baal.

    I have seen an horrible thing in the prophets;  
        They move in falsehood.

    They strengthen the hands of evil doers,  
        So that none repent.

    All of them are become as Sodom,  
        As the inhabitants of Gomorrah.

There is nothing in Old Testament history more interesting than the gradual development of prophecy. Before there were any kings, and long before the Priesthood had attained the importance of its later days, the prophets were at work. They were, as a matter of fact, the Makers of Israel. The deepest instinct of man's heart is a craving for light—light from heaven upon the path of duty, quite as much in the search for lost asses as in the disposition of a kingdom.<sup>1</sup> Nor was the light ever, for long, denied. In the stillness of the Sanctuary, beneath some spreading oak, or behind the plough, men were found to whom the Eternal was intensely real, and the meaning of life plain. As a spiritual phenomenon, Prophecy is not entirely isolated. It has much in common with wizardry and soothsaying among the heathen nations, being at first largely dependent for stimulus on physical conditions, such as darkness or music, and, as a rule, ecstatic in its manifestations. Indeed, what strikes us at this early stage of its development is the almost entire absence of the ethical element. Moments of highest inspiration break in on lives whose ordinary level is very low and earthly.<sup>2</sup> In time, under the guidance of the Divine Spirit this changed. Inspiration became less spasmodic and superficial; the prophetic state tended to become a fixed and conscious attitude of the whole man to God.

With this important change in the nature of Prophecy, went a corresponding change in its methods. At first the prophets did not scruple to use violence to achieve their ends. Kings were anointed and deposed; the political machinery worked almost entirely at their will. In later days such direct inter-

<sup>1</sup> See 1 Samuel ix.

<sup>2</sup> E.g., Balaam, and Saul.

position was forbidden. The prophet's rôle was to admonish and advise; his appeal was no longer to brute force but to the Divine judgments impending on Israel. What was thus lost in the way of political influence, was more than compensated by the increase of spiritual power. Under this wise self-restraint, prophecy became conscious of itself, and of the infinite resource at its command in Jahveh's word. It is remarkable that, while Samuel and Elijah are little more than names to us, we owe to the writings of Joel and Amos and Jeremiah, and others like them, the highest inspiration of our own day.

But while prophecy changed in many ways, it remained unchanged in one important point. It was always a social force. As early as the time of Samuel, young men of gifts and promise gathered together in what were called Schools of the prophets, the universities of those days, where they underwent such intellectual and spiritual discipline as might fit them for their life's work. Such Schools, guilds of the prophets, survived to a very late date, even when overshadowed by the Temple in Jerusalem. In this social element lay at once the strength and weakness of prophecy. The presence of large bodies of young men, united by a common aim and owning one central authority, lent it whatever political influence it still retained. On the other hand, when a society exists, traditions are sure to be formed which tend first to depress, and then to forbid, the exercise of personal freedom. It was natural, too, that, as the Prophetic Order became privileged, as it drew to itself the homage of the people and the patronage of the crown, its members should be more anxious to guard their own interests than to further those of the Kingdom of God. Men joined their ranks simply

to secure an easy and honourable maintenance. Costume, rather than character, came to distinguish them in the public eye.<sup>1</sup> Originally the expression of the freedom and spirituality of religion, Prophecy identified itself with what was most exclusive and official in the age. "But the word of the Lord was not bound"; the inevitable recoil came at last. When the spirit of God stirred in the heart of a man like Amos, his first step was to dissociate himself from these prophetic schools. "I am no prophet, nor the son of a prophet, but a herdsman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruits from my youth." The most persistent opposition Jeremiah had to encounter came from the same quarter. They disliked his unconventional ways; they dreaded his uncompromising integrity. They had the ear of the people, and meant to keep it if they could. It is against these men, the professional preachers, the accredited religious leaders of the day, that this chapter is directed.

In the most solemn way they are warned of the serious danger they incur.

"Their way shall be, to them,  
In slippery places.  
In darkness shall they be driven on,  
And fall therein."

What is meant is made plain by verses which occur later in the chapter (verses 30-32), in which is given what we may describe as the Natural History of a False Prophet. We venture to modernize the passage as follows. A young man joins one of these prophetic schools, or colleges. After the usual training, he is licensed as a spiritual guide or Director, a preacher of Eternal Truths. Of these, however, his personal experience is very small. What he really knows

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Zech. xiii, 4.

is the religious literature of the day, the works of the great Masters of thought and style. He studies a passage from one of these, appropriates its ideas and expressions, and reproduces them as his own. He struts about in borrowed feathers, and, with a charming modesty, receives the admiration of his hearers. The first downward step has been taken ; he has "stolen" his message (verse 30). But he has still a literary conscience. He recognizes that there are limits to lawful borrowing. If he cannot be original, he must at least be independent. Certainly it is not easier to control the Spirit than it is to command the Muse ; but he can always work hard. Instead of borrowing feathers, he beats his brains, very much as a sportsman beats a cover, and seldom without result. He acquires a dangerous facility in the treatment of religious themes. There is, moreover, a certain intoxication in all intense mental effort, which is easily mistaken for inspiration. He "takes his tongue," and reels off his oracles (verse 31). Thus the second downward stage is reached. But mechanical facility leads to worse. The proverb : "Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus," obtains a tragic application in the case of one whose life is spent in teaching others. He hears his own voice, till he can hear no other. He sees life from his own standpoint, till he is incapable of seeing it from any other. The frothy utterances of his own shallow soul are given forth with great unction, in the name of the Eternal, and as eternal truth. He ends by posing as the infallible Pope of a country parish. "Behold, I am against them that prophesy lying dreams and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies and by their froth" (verse 32).

The test of Ministerial faithfulness which is applied here is satisfactory in its simplicity. The author

has no hesitation in discrediting these professional prophets, because he finds in them no moral enthusiasm, no indignation against social wrong, no travail of soul for a higher national life. They do not "turn the people from their wickedness" (verse 14). They "speak peace to men who walk in the stubbornness of their hearts saying, No evil shall be to you" (verse 17). We have heard Jeremiah inveigh against them as "pedlars,"<sup>1</sup> going their rounds and making their poor profit out of the people's sin; and indeed they were more careful to pocket a fee than to produce a wholesome and lasting impression.<sup>2</sup> They thrrove on the religious indifference which tolerated them. There have been such men in every age. Our Lord found them in the Pharisees of His day: "Woe unto you, that tithe mint and anise and cummin, and neglect the weightier matters of the law; that devour widows' houses and for a pretence make long prayers."

Religion is hopelessly discredited when any other interest is preferred in her name to that of Righteousness. And yet how often the Church has condoned Inefficiency, and even Immorality, in consideration of Orthodoxy. How many a preacher, to-day, finds himself arguing this: "If I take politics to the pulpit, if I preach a strong Temperance Sermon, if I apply an abstract idea like National Righteousness to the burning questions of the day, I shall offend some of my people and destroy my influence; better be silent. Make them love their Church, rather than hate their Sin!" That way lies death! "They shall be driven on, and fall therein."

If such risks attend an Ordained Ministry, were it not better to have none? It is always easy to pass from one extreme to the other; the wise and

<sup>1</sup> See chap. xiv, 18.

<sup>2</sup> See Hoshea iv, 8.

safe path lies between. The author believes, not in Revolution, but in Reform. Here is his remedy for a very real and persistent evil.

"For who hath stood in the Council of Jahveh and seen and heard His word, who hath hearkened, let him make it heard (verse 18)."<sup>1</sup> It matters not how we apprehend Truth, by the eye or by the ear, in concrete or abstract; only there must be personal experience of its power. The true prophet must know God. He must be one of the inner circle, into whose ear Jahveh whispers His secrets. He must find his way into the immediate Presence, so that when he comes forth he may speak with authority to men. More than most men, as we know, Jeremiah lived up to this high ideal. We have seen how, on every page, his utterance is broken by swift flashes, jets of upward thought, direct and passionate appeals to Jahveh, to make clear His meaning, to confirm His word. Such sudden breaks, the despair of the mere grammarian, were the prophet's life. They discover the secret springs of certainty and power from which he drew. It has often been very different with his successors. The modern preacher has so many books to read, so many visits to pay, so many meetings to attend, that he can command neither the time nor the strength, with which to wait on God. After ten or fifteen years of such incessant activity, he wakens up with shame to the fact that he has been crowding God out of his life, that the one thing which he professes to know is the one thing of which he is utterly ignorant. The measure of power and success in Christian work is not, of course, the time we give to prayer; it is rather the personal relation in which we stand to God.

<sup>1</sup> Slightly altering the text.

This thought is expanded in two brief fragments of great interest.

(a) "Am I a God near at hand, and not a God afar off? saith Jahveh. Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith Jahveh. Do not I fill heaven and earth?" (verses 23, 24).

"Am I a God near at hand, and not afar off?" As they stand, the words imply that Jahveh's range of vision is not, like ours, narrow and limited; but that He sees and knows what goes on not only in His Heavenly Temple, but throughout the universe, even the secret thought of man's heart. The Greek version, omitting the interrogative particle, reads: "I am a God near at hand, and not afar off"; i.e. it is impossible for us to banish Him into remote space and then, paying Him a distant homage, to live as if He were not. However we take the words, the inference that follows holds good; there is neither far nor near with God. He searches the heart, so that none can hide from Him; He fills heaven and earth, so that all life is the immediate inspiration of His Spirit. We may involve ourselves in a maze of subtle and impressive speech, hiding the nakedness of our souls from others—but never from God, nor long from ourselves. On the other hand, there must be no attempt to limit the Spirit. He who thinks to distinguish between Nature and Grace, proves that he does not know what Grace is. "Earth's crammed with Heaven, and every common bush aflame with God." If we are not always, and everywhere, serving Him, we shall serve Him nowhere.

(b) "What is the straw to the wheat? saith Jahveh. Is not My word like a fire, saith Jahveh, and like a hammer breaking the rock in pieces?" (verses 28, 29).

It is the self-evidencing and self-achieving power

of Truth, that is in the writer's mind. The History of the Church triumphantly demonstrates the fact that wherever the word of God finds utterance, it works both inwardly and outwardly—destroying error as fire consumes chaff, and overcoming opposition as a hammer breaks the rock. For centuries Christ's Evangel was overlaid by Romish superstitions; the forces of civilization were enlisted to repress and enslave the soul. It was a great day for the Church when, amid the gloom of a Convent Library, the light from heaven shone on the sacred page, and the young monk of Wittemberg, for the first time, read those words, The Just shall live by faith. A fire was kindled which is burning still. The chains of darkness fell from his soul; Europe was thrilled by his message; and to-day the forces of civilization are on the side of Freedom and Progress.

The closing paragraph of the section (verses 33-39) is difficult. The key to it lies in the phrase: The Burden of Jahveh. The Hebrew word Massah (i.e. a Burden) became the technical expression for a prophet's message, a message too often of doul and woe, such as broke the heart of him who bore it. But, as prophecy became vain, the phrase lost much of its import. It was passed lightly from lip to lip, by men who had no sense of its awful meaning. They said, What is the Burden, just as we say, How are you, to the man we meet at the corner of a street; chattering cheerily around the central Mystery of life, like sparrows in the oaks about Dodona. "Ye are the Burden" (verse 33)<sup>1</sup> is the answer Jahveh puts into his servant's mouth; "Therefore, I will lift you

and cast you forth<sup>1</sup> from My presence, and the city that I gave unto you and unto your fathers" (verse 39). If men will still inquire of Jahveh, let them be simple and straightforward in their speech ; let them say what they mean, and, above all, let them not say more than they mean. "Thus shall ye say, every man to his neighbour and, every man to his friend, What answer hath Jahveh given ? and, What hath He said ? And ye shall no more mention the Burden of Jahveh." The author is too earnest a soul to trifle with us. He is not the man, one thinks, to make us offenders because of a word. But words are the nests in which ideas breed. Under the shelter of an ancient and venerable phraseology, we may disguise from ourselves and others the meagreness and insincerity of our religious experience. "Pull down the nests, and the rooks will fly," is an old adage ; but the truth it contains is older still.

Every age has its pet phrases, meaning much as they spring fresh from hearts that strive to give expression to their sense of wonder and new joy ; yet tending, with time, to become a mere *façon de parler*—"vacant chaff well meant for grain." On such food religion starves. We hear a great deal in our own day about the Higher Life, the Baptism of the Spirit, Entire Consecration. One is tempted sometimes, like the writer, to forbid the phrase, lest we grow strange to the reality it suggests.

<sup>1</sup> Slightly altering the text.

## CRITICAL NOTES ON CHAPS. XXII—XXIII

Ch. xxii, verses 13–19.

Verse 13. Read: Bôneh-Bart, building a house; and omit the pronom. suffix also in "chambers."

Verse 13b. I venture to suggest "subjects" as the rendering of פָּנִים, rather than the usual but here less suitable, rendering, " Neighbours." Compare the Arabic Ra'iyya-t (plural, Ra'iyyâ) for which Steingass in his Lexicon assigns the following meanings: (a) pasturing flock, (b) subjects, (c) parish. I am aware that the newer Lexicons distinguish the roots. But the question is still open; and a final decision must be influenced by the use of פָּנִים in this, among other passages.

Verse 14b. "With wide windows"; following the LXX, and reading as our text: קְתַּעַת-חַלְלָה. "And panelled in cedar"; again the pass. participle.

Verse 15a. "With thy father in cedar"; altering the pause, so as to combine these words.

Verse 15b. Omit the phrase: "And do justice and judgment." The Editor shrinks from the materialism of a prophet!

Verse 16. "He judged the poor," instead of: "He judged the judgment of the poor": omit the repetition of: Then was it well.

Verse 17b. Omit: "Beyond the gates of Jerusalem."

Verses 20–23.

Verse 23a. Insert the 2nd personal pronoun (feminine).

Verse 23b. "How shalt thou groan?"—Niph'al of 'anah.

Verses 24, 28.

Verse 24. Omit the (needless) epithets.

Verse 28. In the M.T. we read: "Is this man, Coniah, a despised and broken vessel?" The LXX reject the figure, and read: Coniah is despised. Erbt accepts this. Duhm and Giesebrecht, on stylistic grounds, retain 'eqeb. Duhm rightly thinks the two participles following each other suspicious, and rejects: Broken. But surely we should retain: Broken, as more in keeping

with the noun. In this phrase (a broken vessel) we have the prophetic foundation of the Editorial passage (chap. xix, 10).

Ch. xxiii, verses 9-12.

Verse 9b. Omit: "As a strong man"; and "Because of Jahveh and His holy words."

Verse 10. The text is corrupt. In the M.T. we read: For the land is full of adulterers; for because of swearing the land mourneth. But these two clauses are variants of one original. They suggest an extravagance alien to the prophet. Perhaps we may read: Ki Mip-penēhem 'ab<sup>el</sup>ah ha-'arec.

Verse 11. "Are utterly profane." The line is defective. Duhm supplies the Infin. absol.

Verses 13-14. One is struck, in the M.T., by the reference to the prophets of Samaria, of whom (if there were any) our prophet can have known little; also by their summary condemnation. So new a theme, if introduced at all, must have been more fully dealt with. On the other hand, the (rhetorical) repetition of the formula: "I have seen," disposed the copyist to distinguish, and thus to insert Samaria in verse 13, and Jerusalem in verse 14.

In verse 14 "They commit adultery" is evidently a reference to the editorial text of verse 13, and must be rejected with it. In 14c, instead of: The inhabitants of Gomorrah, the M.T. reads: Her inhabitants are as Gomorrah. But this was subsequent to the insertion of Jerusalem into the text.

## THE TURNING POINT

### CHAPTER XXV<sup>1</sup>

**H**ITHERTO we have had to deal almost exclusively with events confined in their interest to the narrow circle of Jewish politics. At this point the interest widens out, and it becomes necessary to take a more general survey of the situation, as it affected all the East, during the prophet's lifetime.

(a) And, first of all, we must dwell for a moment on an event of great importance, the Renaissance of Egypt. For long that country had been a mere shadow of her former self, a prey to Ethiopia, on the one hand, and Assyria on the other. But a change had come at last. Psammetichus, the founder of the Saitic dynasty, an Assyrian satrap—though an Egyptian by birth—had asserted his independence and been crowned by an old title as Lord of the Two Egypts. The story tells how, while still only an adventurer, he had been advised by an oracle that he should sit on the throne of Egypt when a man of brass, from out the sea, should fight for him. Musing on this strange prediction, he invited Ionian and Carian mercenaries, hardy warriors of the Greek race, to land on his shores, and with them swept the field. Having proved the efficiency of the Greeks on the field, he sought their alliance in commerce as well. Egypt, the most conservative of countries, the Celestial Empire of the Old World, was thrown open, and a revival of all the

<sup>1</sup> For chap. xxiv. see page 214.

peaceful arts was the result. The characteristics of Egyptian sculpture, its massive strength, and vigorous originality, yield at this period to "a gentle and almost feminine tenderness," which students have no difficulty in tracing to the Greek element then predominant in the national life.<sup>1</sup> This Renaissance of Egypt was rendered possible by the gradual decline of the hitherto dominant power in Asia. But Assyria was still a formidable rival, and Psammetichus prepared for the chastisement he had reason to expect. He made war on the Philistines, conquered Gaza, Ascalon, and Ashdod, the latter after a siege of twenty-nine years, and converted them into a line of defence for his own kingdom. But his success seems to have been doubtful and temporary. Ashdod quickly arose from its ruins ; while we find his immediate successor obliged to reconquer Gaza. Nor were other elements of weakness wanting in the New Egypt created by the genius of Psammetichus. The mercenaries who had expelled the Assyrian remained to repress domestic troubles, Greek soldiers held the place of honour in the Egyptian army. Greek traders received allotments of land in the richest of Egyptian soil. The seeds of discord were thus sown, the fruit of which it was for other hands to reap.

Psammetichus was followed by Necho, a great ruler, who aspired still further to revive the ancient glories of Egypt. Having circumnavigated Africa, he stretched out his hand to recover his empire as far as the Euphrates. It was at this point (608 B.C.) that Egypt came into collision with Judah. Relying on the religious enthusiasm which had galvanized Judah into a semblance of life, Josiah presumed to interpose ; and paid the penalty on the field of Megiddo. Naturally there are traces of a strong Egyptian party in Jerusalem

<sup>1</sup> See Brugsch's *Egypt*.

at this time. It was to Egypt many looked for deliverance, during the siege ; and down to Egypt the little band, left after the Fall of the City, turned their steps. Of the later relations of Egypt with Judah something may be said afterwards<sup>1</sup> but these later developments scarcely come within the scope of the student of Jeremiah.

(b) We turn now to the North. For centuries Assyria had dominated the East. But the old lion was no longer able to hunt his prey, or to make the earth tremble with his roar. Younger and more vigorous nations had gathered round, eager to divide the spoil. We have seen how, as early as the reign of Assur-bani-pal, Psammetichus recovered Egypt ; East of the Tigris Media was in revolt ; to the South, Babylon was in constant unrest. Elam was always an uncertain factor, now submissive, now defiant ; while Westward, toward the Levant, stretched the powerful Lydian kingdom. The Scythian invasion, repressing these restless factors, had only succeeded in delaying the inevitable. Assur-bani-pal was succeeded by Assur-idil-iti (the Sarakos of Greek history) ; with whom, so far as we can tell, the long list of Assyrian kings came to an end. Those must have been stirring days ; more stirring even than our own. The latest development in the political world was a Triple Alliance between Media, Lydia, and Babylon, cemented by royal marriages. The King of Media married the daughter of the Lydian King, and gave his daughter as wife to the son of the King of Babylon. This latter marriage between Nebuchadrezzar and Amytis, the Median princess, must have been no mere *mariage de convenance* but an *affaire de cœur*, if we are to believe the pretty story, told by Herodotus, that it

<sup>1</sup> See under chap. xliv.

was for his Highland Queen that Nebuchadrezzar built those Hanging Gardens of Babylon, which were the wonder of the world. The result of this redress of the Balance of Power was the Fall of Nineveh (607 B.C.) Nothing in history is more amazing than the sudden and silent collapse of what had been the greatest city of the world. Only Nahum, watching from a distance, celebrates, with grim satisfaction, the vengeance meted out to the guilty city which had so long oppressed the earth.

(c) The year 604 B.C., the fourth year of Jehoiakim, was a turning point in the history, not only of Jeremiah, but of the East. Four years earlier, as we have seen, Egypt had been the dominant power in Syria ; dreaming, under the inspiration of a new and powerful dynasty, of an empire which should reach Northward to the Euphrates. Since then her army had swept all before it, and was still prosecuting one of those protracted campaigns, lasting over years, which were the landmarks of history in those heroic days. But the situation in the North had changed rapidly. The Assyrian empire, overgrown and undermined by success, after repeated efforts to recover itself, had fallen at last, and its vast provinces had been partitioned among its enemies. The King of Babylon, Nabopollassar, to whose amazing pertinacity and political adroitness the altered situation was largely due, was already an old man, and died soon after the successful issue of his scheme. But his place was taken by a son, still more gifted, and destined to play one of the great rôles in universal history. The real glory of Nebuchadrezzar was his domestic policy ; the reorganization of an empire after ages of decadence, and the virtual creation of a new city. Yet he is better known in history as a soldier. Even before his father's death,

he was practically King of Babylon, leading her armies and inaugurating fresh schemes of distant conquest. Thus it was no longer with Nineveh that Egypt had to do, but with a young and aggressive power. Instead of the feeble protests of age, the energy and insolence of youth were opposed to her. The two armies met at Carchemish, on the Euphrates (604 B.C.) ; one laden with spoil and glutted with success, the other spurred on by hope and hungry for battle. The result could not be doubtful. The remains of the Egyptian army dribbled southwards through the mountain passes of Bashan,<sup>1</sup> and Nebuchadrezzar was lord of all Syria. Like a flash of lightning, the news passed through Jerusalem, bringing with it the wider outlook and that clearness of conception which marked the prophet's later days. On the people, too, the effect was immediate and lasting. They could no longer make merry over the prophet as a bird of evil omen. Jahveh had spoken by him ; and, for good or evil, they must reckon with him as one of the chief political factors of the day. Under these circumstances he determines to address to them a new and emphatic appeal.

We are already familiar, to some extent, with the origin and growth of the Book we are studying, and can realize the nature of the critical problems it presents. In front of it, we have found a series of oracles of undoubted authenticity, delivered by the prophet during the early days of his ministry. Shortly after the date now reached, he received Divine directions to commit these to writing, so as to widen and perpetuate their influence. This he did with the help of Baruch, the scribe, as we shall further learn from chap. xxxvi. It

<sup>1</sup> See chap. xlvi, 11.

would, however, be a great mistake to suppose that the prophet's interest and energy were, even for a time, absorbed in this new literary undertaking. He was always, first and foremost, the preacher. Even while Baruch's pen is busy, the city and the palace are ringing with news of another important utterance from his lips. The record of this, preserved for us in chap. xxv, was apparently appended to the Roll, and, as we shall see, proved decisive of its fate.<sup>1</sup> Like the previous oracles, it discovers traces of frequent manipulation, and certainly cannot have left the prophet's lips as it reaches us to-day. Let us see what we can make of it.

Verses 1-8. The first eight verses contain a brief review of the past. One can see at a glance that, brief as it is, it must be still further abbreviated. The double dating of verse 1 is certainly the result of calculation, and the work of a later hand. Then, in idea and phraseology, verse 3 repeats itself in verse 4; as does verse 6 in verse 7. At a glance, too, we can see that verse 5 should follow verse 3, verse 4 breaking the connexion. Throughout the passage there is an evident reduplication of agencies, Divine and human. The history of the passage may be traced thus: First of all, the prophet reviews his ministry, laying stress on the call to Repentance (verses 3, 5, 6). At a later period a desire is felt to emphasize the fact that what the prophet had said, Jahveh had said through him; and this led to the insertion of verses 4 and 7. The needful grammatical alterations were then made, to secure the sequence of the narrative.<sup>2</sup> Last of all, the final issue, adequately and impressively stated in verse 7, was anticipated in verse 3, and rehearsed in

<sup>1</sup> See on xxxvi, 29.

<sup>2</sup> Thus, in verse 6, read 'Eth-Jahve, for 'othi.

verse 4, with an evident impatience of delay. The passage may be restored thus :

Verse 3. "From the thirteenth year of Josiah, son of Amos, King of Judah, unto this day, these three and twenty years, the word of Jahveh has come to me ; and I have spoken to you rising early and speaking. (Verse 5) This was the burden of my message, Turn ye now every man from his evil ways, and from the evil of your doings, and dwell in the land that Jahveh hath given to you and to your fathers, from the days of old and in perpetuity. (Verse 6) And go ye not after other gods, to serve them and to worship them, lest ye provoke Jahveh to anger<sup>1</sup> with the work of your hands to your hurt. (Verse 7) Yet ye have not hearkened unto me."

There is something startling in the brevity with which the results of a quarter of a century of teaching and preaching are thus summed up. If we pass fifty faces rapidly before a camera, what is peculiar to each is rejected, what is common to all is retained. The resultant impression gives the essential features of the human face. So it is with the mental camera. The various prophetic utterances we have studied, the arguments enforced, the appeals made, each in turn forgotten, have left behind them a single permanent impression,—that of a God infinitely patient, yet inexorably just ; of a Gospel which puts the best within reach of every man, yet conditions all on the response made, and the obedience of faith. "God requires that which is past." The clang of the horse's hoofs, as they carried tidings of a great battle through the heart of the city, stirred not only the dust of her streets, but, like ghosts, the memories of her past ; and brought the people face to face with a direct and solemn issue.

<sup>1</sup> Driver renders the verb uniformly by *Tex*.

Verses 8-14. The people have rejected the prophet's message, and now they shall hear their doom. In picturesque and suggestive language he indicates the utter desolation coming on the land. No more shall be heard the sound of mirth and gladness. No more, where the fig tree blossoms, shall men whisper their loves and women breathe their vows. No more at evening shall be heard the grinding of the mill stones, in preparation for the evening meal—so sweet a sound to the traveller as he nears his home ; and, should you pass through the deserted streets after sundown, not a candle set in a window shall betray the presence of life within. For seventy years, not Jerusalem only, but the surrounding nations shall serve the King of Babylon.

The mention of the King of Babylon in verse 9 must, on purely grammatical grounds, be rejected ; but I can see no reason to reject it in verse 11. It would be strange if no echo were to reach us here of a name which must have been on everybody's lips ; if across these pages, so full of contemporary interest and action, no shadow were to fall of that commanding figure which, for half a century, was to dominate the East. On the other hand, when it is written : "They shall serve the King of Babylon seventy years," we must not twist the prophet's words into a promise of restoration from Babylon when seventy years have passed. A round number is used here, as often, to suggest an indefinitely prolonged period. If we were assured by a voice from Heaven that within a year's time London would be overthrown by an earthquake and lie in ruins for half a century, we should feel no temptation to anticipate its possible restoration thereafter. For ourselves and for our children, such a sentence would be one of immediate and final doom. No doubt it was so, with the prophet's contemporaries. What he says is, in

effect, that for two entire generations, till all who heard him speak should sink into the grave, from the old man leaning on his staff to the babe in its cradle, God's heavy judgment should rest on the land.

Some very difficult verses meet us just here (verses 12-14) of which it is enough to say that they bear every trace of a post-Exilic origin, and were inserted at a later period to comfort the exiles when the Fall of Babylon was imminent.<sup>1</sup>

verses 15-20. The prophet is directed still further to emphasize the nature and extent of the coming judgment. He is to take a cup, full of the wine of the wrath of God, and to make the nations drink. It is scarcely needful to warn the reader at this point, that the prophet's language is figurative, and the whole transaction purely idealistic. The mere suggestion of it is as impressive as the actual performance would have been grotesque, and, indeed, physically impossible. It is only if we bear this in mind that the passage is freed from serious inconsistency. In verse 17, the prophet reports progress: "I took the cup and made them drink." Yet in verse 27, further communications are received which imply that the task is yet to be undertaken: "Thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith Jahveh of Hosts, the God of Israel, Drink ye, indeed, and be drunken, and fall and rise no more, because of the sword that I am sending among you." The contradiction is only apparent. As the prophet conceives the purpose of Jahveh toward the nations, and the part he is himself to play in it, his faith sees it already accomplished; but, as he reflects on it, and perceives all that is implied in it—the difficulties attending it, and the objections that are sure to be raised,

<sup>1</sup> See Critical Note at end of chapter, verses 15-29.

the whole question is re-opened in his mind. How shall he state it so as to make plain, at once, the severity and the justice of the judgment that is to come? The answer is given in verses 28-29.

The following list of the Nations on which the judgment is to fall, may not have escaped the pen of "the ready writer"; but we cannot regard it as other than substantially authentic. The prophet begins with his own people and passes at once to Egypt, associating with it "the mingled people," i.e., the foreigners who had settled in it for purposes of trade.<sup>1</sup> The list then proceeds in the usual prophetic order, starting with the neighbouring tribes, the cities of the Philistines, Gaza, Ascalon, and "the remnant of Ashdod." Out-lying Edom, and Moab, and Ammon, follow. Further North, the eye rests on Tyre; and, Eastward, on the wandering Arab tribes. It is probable that Uz, associated with Egypt in verse 20, should be transposed, and entered with Edom and Moab in verse 21. In Lamentations iv, 2 the Daughter of Edom is described as "dwelling in Uz"; a phrase which suggests that Edom had lately conquered Uz, so that the two would naturally be linked together in this catalogue of the Nations.<sup>2</sup> The phrase which recurs so often, "All the kings," is a vague expression, betraying the hand of one who lived long after the period with which he is dealing. It is doubtful whether verses 25 and 26 may be retained as belonging, entirely or in part, to the original oracle, or whether they must be rejected. Zimri is unknown;

<sup>1</sup> It is necessary to distinguish the "mingled people" ('ereb) or Traders in Egypt at this time, from the Sākīr or mercenaries (see chap. xlvi, 21).

<sup>2</sup> See Fries in *Studien ü Kritiken*, 1854. In the LXX of Job, Uz is located "in the borders of Idumea."

Elam was notorious for its policy of shift, now yielding to Assyria, now in league with Babylon. The Medes had already reached the zenith of their short-lived empire. There is therefore nothing in verse 25 to compel its rejection. In verse 26, on the other hand, the mention of "the Northern kingdoms" is suspicious. In verse 8 they are cited as the agents and executors of the Divine judgment, and cannot well be its objects at the same time.

The one thing that is certain is that the close of verse 26 ("And the King of Sheshach shall drink after them") was inserted by a later hand. Sheshach must be accepted as a cypher for Babylon. According to a familiar figure, known as Athbash, the first letter of the alphabet might be represented by the last, and the second by the second last, and so forth. Thus, Babel is read as Sheshach. But it is impossible to believe that Jeremiah would have insinuated an unpalatable and dangerous truth under such a disguise. If he had meant Babylon he would have said so. Here again, as in connexion with verse 12 we must believe that, when the Fall of Babylon was imminent, this entry was added to the list, just as we might add the names of Constantinople and Athens and Rome, thus bringing up to date this Book of Doom. No exemption is made; no protest allowed. "And it shall be, if they refuse to take the cup from thine hand to drink, that thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith Jahveh of Hosts, Ye shall surely drink."

The symbolism of the Vision, with its stern and unlovely realism, needs no interpretation. For a century Judah and the surrounding nations had been in a state of perpetual ferment. Intoxicated by momentary success, they had staked all on what proved to be a losing game. They had dreamed, each in turn,

of independence and supremacy ; and now, divided and debauched, they fell an easy prey to the virile and united North. Like Saxon heroes in their dim Valhalla, they had held high revels ; but the wine was drugged. The sword of the conqueror was the magician's wand ; and, like Circe's swine, they must wallow in their own vomit.

Verses 30-38. What follows consists of various oracles from unknown hands. The style closely resembles that of Jeremiah, but the treatment suggests imitation rather than originality. They are meant to depict the opening and progress of the judgment scene as already foretold.

## CRITICAL NOTE ON CHAP. XXV

**Veres 8-14.** The distinguished scholar Schwally, as the result of a careful scrutiny of the text, has narrowed the scope of the judgment predicted by the prophet, to Judah alone, omitting all reference to the surrounding nations. He reads thus:

**Verse 9.** "Behold, I will send and take all the families of the North, saith Jahveh, and bring them against this land and against the inhabitants thereof; (v. 11) and the whole land shall be waste and a desolation, and they shall serve the nations seventy years." This, of course, simplifies the text and is not without support from the LXX (*καὶ δουλεῖωσι ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν*). Giesebricht, however, has suggested another explanation of the Greek text; *אֲבָדָן בְּנָוִים*: i.e. The families of the North (verse 9) shall enslave these nations). It seems improbable that, at a crisis like this, any man, with the outlook of our prophet, should confine his attention to one people, even if that one were his own; and particularly that, in an oracle, the *motif* of which is the advance of Nebuchadrezzar, he should content himself any longer with vague predictions of subjection to "the nations."

**Veres 12-14.** It is quite evident that these verses were inserted later. In verse 13 every mark of an Editorial hand is found. The phrases hang loosely together. "Crescit eundo." It is an excellent example of a "snowball" sentence. Every scribe, as he copies it, adds to it. With verse 12, verse 14 stands or falls.

In verse 13 reference is made to a Book from the hand of Jeremiah which, of course, did not exist when this oracle was uttered. Streane suggests that the words may have served as an introduction to the Oracles concerning the Nations, which are embedded here in the Greek version of Jeremiah; and that, when these were transferred to the position they now hold in the Hebrew (and our English) Bible, at the close of the Book (chaps. xlvi-li), this verse was left, like Browning's Sea-jelly,<sup>1</sup> to tell "dry sea-beach gazers how it fared, when there was mid-sea and the mighty things" in this now depleted corner. But even if any number of these Oracles of the Nations once found a place in the immediate sequel, still this verse, which refers to them as already written, must have been from a later hand.

<sup>1</sup> See *The Death in the Desert*.

## A TEMPLE ADDRESS

### CHAPTER XXVI

**I**N chap. xxvi we have a brief summary of a notable appeal made by the prophet, early in the reign of Jehoiakim; with a more detailed account of its results, and the first conflict between him and the Temple authorities. The chapter is based, no doubt, on the *Memorabilia* of Baruch, who probably witnessed what is here narrated.

(a) The appeal (verses 1-6). The Summary is unfortunately very defective. In verse 2 the prophet is bidden stand in the Temple court and speak "all the words" which Jahveh has commanded him. We are not told what these words were. No doubt the original document contained information on this point which has been omitted here. At the close of verse 6 we expect some notice of the circumstances under which the prophet fulfilled this charge; but, again, we are disappointed. It is true that chap. vii, 1-16, is based on the same original document, and contains a somewhat fuller summary of the prophet's argument; but even so, our information is of the most meagre kind. What we are sure of is, that the ethical and evangelical factors, never absent from the utterance of a true prophet, were in full force. The heart of grace which hides behind the gloomiest vaticinations shines out here with the warmth of sunlight, tempting the people to return. "It may be they will hearken and turn every man from his evil way" (verse 3). On the

other hand, in the absence of true repentance, they are warned that there must be no reliance on the mere externals of worship : “ If ye will not hearken, then will I make this house like Shiloh, and I will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth ” (verse 6).

(b) The Result. At this point the text becomes fuller and much more vivid. Skilfully his enemies ignore the point of the prophet’s appeal, and concentrate attention on what was undoubtedly the weak point in his armour. Scarcely had he ended when the priests and the prophets and all the people laid hold on him, saying : “ Thou shalt surely die ; why hast thou prophesied in Jahveh’s name, saying, This house shall be as Shiloh and this city desolate ? ” They admit his claim to be a prophet ; but they insinuate that he has abused his commission, speaking treason against Jahveh’s city and the Temple, in Jahveh’s name. The tumult that ensued brought the Princes from the palace, where no doubt they were engaged in the discharge of public business, on the scene. An informal Tribunal was improvised in the New Gate of the Temple, and the prophet was put on his trial. At this point the narrative is once more disjointed. In verse 16 judgment is given in his favour ; while, in verse 17 ff., the pleading is summarized on which, no doubt, his acquittal was based. The plea urged in his defence was that of Precedent. Some of the older men recalled the bold stand made by Micah in the days of Hezekiah ; how he prophesied that Zion should be ploughed like a field and Jerusalem left in heaps ; and how the King, instead of silencing the fearless monitor, laid his warning to heart and, by prompt repentance, saved the city (verses 18-19). The application to Jeremiah’s case was easy. “ Then all the princes and all the people said to the priests,

This man is not worthy of death, for he hath spoken to us in the name of Jahveh, our God" (verse 16). As a matter of fact, the prophet owed his safety, in the long run, rather to the friendly offices of an individual, than to the judgment of the Court. The people seem to have been overawed, rather than convinced. A tumult ensued, stirred up by the priests, during which the prophet was removed to friendly quarters by Ahikam (verse 24).

It is interesting to study the various groups as depicted in this lively chapter. The Priests and the Prophets, that is, the Ecclesiastics of the day, are ranged solidly against Jeremiah. Their authority and prestige are at stake; and they fight for their lives. They are the Irreconcilables. The Laity, as represented by the Princes, are, for the time at least, friendly to the prophet. To them, the whole affair is a question about words; and they are glad to dismiss it under any decent pretext—Precedent, or otherwise. The people are consistently unstable; easily excited against the prophet (verse 8), amenable to lawful authority (verse 12), responsive to a manly appeal from the prophet's own lips (verse 16), but relapsing, with fatal facility, into the bull-dog showing his teeth (verse 24). Jeremiah himself is worthy of all admiration. He exhibits the most perfect self-control, pleads his commission, urges on the people the necessity for repentance, and is apparently much more anxious about their salvation than about his own. "But as for me, behold, I am in your hands; do to me as ye think well and fair. Only ye must certainly understand that, if ye kill me, ye will bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and on this city, and on its inhabitants; for, of a truth, Jahveh hath sent me to you to speak all these words in your ears."

The mention, in verse 20, of Urijah, the son of Shemaiah, as one who prophesied against the city and against the land "according to all the words of Jeremiah," deserves a passing notice. It proves that, if Elijah had his seven thousand secret well-wishers, who had not bowed the knee to Baal, Jeremiah, more fortunate in this respect, had at least one who stood openly by his side and confirmed the truth of his message. A momentary weakness proved fatal to Urijah. Fearing the anger of the King, he fled to Egypt, but was fetched thence and paid the penalty with his life. Jeremiah, on the other hand, inspired fear in others by his own fearlessness, and outlived his enemies.

Interesting, too, is the mention in verse 24 of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, as the patron and protector of the prophet. Shaphan, the father of Ahikam, held high office under Josiah, and introduced to the notice of the young king the new Torah, or Law, as discovered in the Temple.<sup>1</sup> To Ahikam, with others, was entrusted the duty of further inquiries, and the inauguration of ecclesiastical Reforms.<sup>2</sup> The fact that he is here found in close and friendly relation with Jeremiah, is one of many incidental proofs of the attitude assumed by the latter to the Deuteronomic movement. Gemariah, a brother of Ahikam, plays an equally friendly part, at a somewhat later stage in the prophet's life. Still another brother, Elasar, is honourably mentioned in connexion with a royal Embassy to Babylon in chap. xxix. Gedaliah, the son of Ahikam, is the one heroic figure which stands, side by side with our prophet, amid the gloom of the last days; and to him, in that great crisis, Jeremiah, owed his liberty, if not his life. Such is the record of a noble family which, for three successive generations, held high office within the

<sup>1</sup> 2 Kings xxii, 10.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Kings xxii, 12.

State. It is a pity that there should be one exception. Jaazaniah, son of Shaphan, is mentioned by Ezekiel as one of those who defiled the Temple court with idolatry.<sup>1</sup>

The incident here recorded marks the first crisis in the prophet's life. He had thrown down the gauntlet, and it had been taken up. He might reckon henceforth on determined and organized opposition. There remained only one alternative, victory or death.

[The New Gate (verse 10). This gate may have been that built by Jotham (2 Kings xv, 35). Apparently (from chap. xxxvi, 10) it led from the upper or inner court of the Temple into the outer Court which included the Public Offices and the Palace, the wall of which ran round the hill at a lower level.

The Palace stood on the Temple Hill, behind the Temple and on a slightly lower elevation. There was direct communication from one to other.]

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<sup>1</sup> Ezekiel viii, 11.

## AN INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS CHAPTERS XXVII, XXVIII

**A** WIDE gap of eleven years separates chap. xxv from the chapters now before us ; and it is necessary briefly to supply the intervening links. After the Battle of Carchemish (604 B.C.) and the rout of the Egyptian army, Syria was overrun by the Chaldeans. For three years Jehoiakim paid tribute to their King, but afterwards grew restive and reverted to his original dependence on Egypt. As a consequence, Nebuchadrezzar sent " bands of the Chaldeans against him," <sup>1</sup> and stirred up the Moabites and Ammonites who were not unwilling to score against an ancient rival, even at the risk of playing into the hands of a common foe. The last days of Jehoiakim must have been full of sore travail. In his eleventh year the Chaldean King took the field against him, and the end came quickly. Jehoiakim was succeeded by Jehoiachin, who held the throne for three months, and was then deported to Babylon, with the flower of his nobility and the treasures of his city. The last king of the House of David was Zedekiah. For four years he was subject to Babylon ; then the same old story of intrigue and defection began again, plunging the city into a fatal conflict with the Chaldeans.

The fourth year of Zedekiah was nearly as memorable as the fourth year of Jehoiakim. Embassies had already been passing to and from Babylon, no doubt to do homage to the great King. In this year (if we may

<sup>1</sup> 2 Kings xxiv, 2.

trust a note appended to chap. li),<sup>1</sup> Zedekiah himself made the long journey, for reasons which may be conjectured later on. It must have been a strange experience for this scion of the House of David, to find himself in the spacious streets of the great city, with its temples and towers, its network of canals and its wide spreading cornfields around ; Jewish majesty, wholly eclipsed by the splendour of a heathen capital. Meantime Jerusalem itself had been the scene of unwonted activity. It is evidence of the severity of the Chaldean yoke, that the very tribes which, ten years before, had been intensely hostile to Judah, were eager now, laying aside all differences, to unite in a determined effort, to recover their freedom. Edom, too, burying an ancient feud, joined in ; while Tyre, forgetting the pride of her wealth, made common cause with her humbler neighbours. The geographical position of Judah, as the central point of Syria and the objective of any advance on the part of the Chaldean army, made it of importance to secure the adhesion of Zedekiah ; and, no doubt, it was with this aim that an International Congress was held in Jerusalem, in the spring of 593 B.C. Egypt, indeed, was not represented ; but the assurance that she was at their back, more deeply pledged than any of them to resistance and revolt, lent weight to their deliberations. It was at this point that Jeremiah, hitherto a silent but observant spectator, struck in. With the grim humour which he could affect on occasion, he appeared in the streets of the city and at the doors of the Council room, wearing a yoke such as oxen plough with. Any disposition to treat his action as an unmannerly jest, must have been checked by the emphasis and evident earnestness with which he interpreted it. What, in effect, he said, was this.

<sup>1</sup> Chap. li. *vv.* 59-64.

"Jahveh is Lord of all. He has appointed Nebuchadrezzar as his vicegerent over the nations. In the present political situation of Syria, the Chaldean supremacy must be regarded as a merciful dispensation. The one strong power in the East, Babylon can offer the blessings of a permanent and peaceful rule to others, torn by internal dissensions. In submission, there is hope; in resistance, there is none. The nations that will not serve Nebuchadrezzar, shall perish; the nation that will bend its neck and accept the yoke, shall live."

[Duhm thinks that the prophet's message was as follows: So shall all the nations bear the yoke of the King of Babylon. Erbt sums it up thus: Thus saith Jahveh, God of Israel. Put your necks under, and serve the King of Babylon. It is, of course, impossible to say just how far the Editor has retained the *ipsissima verba* of the prophet; how far he has amplified.]

With what feelings this manifesto was received, what answer or no-answer was returned to it, we are not told. The result of this intervention, of this application of moral dynamite, is certain enough—a whole Congress blown into thin air; Excellencies filing out of the city gates into dim distance, some of them to reappear six years later, no longer as ambassadors of peace.<sup>1</sup> It may have been to cover these treasonable proceedings that, as we have seen, Zedekiah travelled to Baylon, and paid homage to the Babylonian king.

Having dismissed the representatives of Foreign Powers, the prophet turns to his own people. Of Zedekiah, the King, we shall have more to say by and by; a well-meaning but weak man, not indisposed to a religious view of life, but under the heel of the disorderly and ungodly crew that now ruled within the city. Toward him, Jeremiah's attitude is con-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Obad., verse 11.

sistently that of patient strength, as of one who would fain save him from his evil surroundings (verses 12-15). It is not really with the King, but with the priests and prophets who control him, that Jeremiah has to deal. These men, still confident in the results of their political machinations, were feeding the people with vain hopes. They assured them, that there was nothing to fear from Babylon. The tide of Jewish fortunes had already reached its lowest ebb ; very soon, on a flowing tide, the spoil which had been sucked through the gates of the city and swept away to Babylon would be restored. "The vessels of the Lord's House shall now shortly be brought back from Babylon." The prophet's reply is extremely caustic. He makes no attempt to refute their inveterate optimism. He merely suggests that, if they are true prophets and have the mind of Jahveh in what they say, then, instead of painting bright pictures of the future, they ought to bend their energies to the present emergency, so as at least to stay the progress of the conquering Power. "Let them intercede with Jahveh, that no more of the sacred vessels be carried away." In other words, as against their prophecies of speedy restoration, he places his own, of the city's final doom.

Chap. xxviii. Such direct and emphatic contradiction of popular religious ideas, could not be allowed to pass unchallenged by the prophets. The champion of his Order was Hananiah, a man with as bold a front and as stately a style as Jeremiah himself could affect, and with a message much more congenial to the popular taste. "And it came to pass that Hananiah, the son of Azzur, the prophet, which was of Gibeon, spake to Jeremiah<sup>1</sup> in Jahveh's House, in the presence of the priests

<sup>1</sup> So we must read, instead of the present text ("unto me").  
Cf. verse 5.

and of all the people, saying : 'Thus saith Jahveh of Hosts, the God of Israel, I have broken the yoke of the King of Babylon. Within two years will I bring back to this place all the vessels of Jahveh's house which Nebuchadrezzar, King of Babylon, took away from this place and carried them to Babylon ; and Jeconiah, the son of Jehoiakim, King of Judah, and all the exiles of Judah that went to Babylon, will I bring back to this place, saith Jahveh. For I will break the yoke of the King of Babylon.'

A notable advance is made here in the definiteness of the prophecy (" Within two years"), and the extent of the promise (" I will bring again Jeconiah, and all the exiles of Judah"). Hearken, Jeremiah, thou son of Hilkiah, thus speaks the man who loves his country, and in whom the spirit of Jahveh dwells ! Jeremiah's answer is prompt and emphatic. " Amen, so be it ! But is it certainly so ? Others have prophesied before me and thee, men inspired by the spirit of Jahveh. If they spoke of peace, it was not like thee, with jaunty air, but with a wise reserve, appealing to the judgment of the Future. Art thou then so sure ? " (verses 5-9). But Hananiah is troubled with no doubts. Taking the yoke from Jeremiah's neck, he breaks it in pieces, saying : Thus shall be broken the yoke of the Chaldeans. Jahveh's people shall be free (verse 10).

It is not difficult to understand Jeremiah's attitude toward Hananiah. When he said, " Amen, so be it," there was no irony in his tone. It was the Amen of his whole soul. It was no light thing to denounce ruin on the land of his fathers and the home of his birth. Had he not prayed for this people, and protested on their behalf ? And now, confronted by one who claimed an equal inspiration, and possessed an

assurance that he himself could not always boast, must he not falter? Clearly we may admit that Jeremiah was not less inspired, because he was conscious of his own limits. He was not less true to Jahveh, because he doubted sometimes of himself. He was one in whom the spirit of St. Paul was already stirring, "willing to be accursed from God for his people's sake whom he loved." How gladly would he be proved to be in the wrong: and yet could that be? "Jahveh is righteous. That is the fundamental idea, the axiom of prophecy in Israel. Can He then ignore facts? Can he spare the city, being still impenitent? Can He confirm a people in its evil ways, by an exercise of unconditioned mercy? Who can by searching find out God? All things are possible!" So, we fancy the prophet reasoning within himself, as he went his way, silent, troubled, to seek by prayer and meditation that moral certainty which had been shaken, for the moment, by Hananiah's blatant self-assertion. Nor does he seek in vain. That night the word of Jahveh came to him; as we should say, The truth breaks in on him. *Es leuchtet mir ein!* Mercy shown to Judah as she is, would be treason to the eternal principles of Righteousness. Next morning he reappears, his spirit once more invested with its radiant serenity, moving among the people like a star amid a drifting wrack of storm-cloud. "Go and tell Hananiah, Thus saith Jahveh, Thou hast broken the bars of wood, but I will make in their stead bars of iron. For thus saith Jahveh of Hosts, I have put a yoke of iron upon the neck of all these nations that they may serve Nebuchadrezzar, King of Babylon, and they shall serve him. Hear now, Hananiah. Jahveh hath not sent thee, yet thou makest this people trust in a lie. Therefore thus saith Jahveh, Behold I will send thee (no other sending,

for thee !) from off the face of the earth. This year shalt thou die, because thou hast spoken treason against Jahveh."

It is not so easy to understand Hananiah. Some have found in the vehemence of the man, too much protesting, the marks of a bad conscience.<sup>1</sup> Others have discovered in him nothing unworthy a true servant of God, a good but narrow-minded man, sincere if mistaken.<sup>2</sup> We may safely grant that he was not consciously a deceiver. If he was, others, who sided with him, were not. It is more doubtful whether he had any deep conviction or spiritual experience, such as entitled him to speak thus in the name of God. Perhaps he was one of those of whom our Lord uttered those enigmatic words : " If ye were blind, ye should have no sin ; but now ye say, we see, therefore your sin remaineth." With characteristic acumen, Dr. A. B. Davidson notes that the Old Testament never speaks of False Prophets, but only of men " who prophesied falsely." Men like Hananiah represented the Past. Theirs was a crude and naturalistic conception of Religious Truth, already outgrown by the higher spirits of the age. They believed in Jahveh as the National Deity, bound up with the fortunes of the people. It was natural for them to assume an optimistic tone, to assert that all was well, till others, and perhaps they themselves, believed it. It was the irony of fate that these men, being true to the Past, proved false to the Present ; that, clinging to the outer form of things, they missed that spirit of freedom and progress which is the essence of true prophecy. Men like Jeremiah, on the other hand, believed in Jahveh, first of all, as an ethical force. They despaired of things as they were, but they never lost heart or hope for the

<sup>1</sup> So Giesebricht.

<sup>2</sup> So Bennett (*Expositor's Bible*).

Future. What seemed their pessimism, was the expression of a vital, but undeveloped, Faith. This scanty justice let us do to Hananiah ; he knew when he was beaten. Face to face, not with hesitancy and suppositions, but with a great moral certainty fearlessly applied, he, in his turn, is silent and goes his way. Not yet stone blind ; with yet some poor receptivity for spiritual truth ; beyond redemption as a prophet, he was not yet beyond hope as a man.

The incident just reviewed raises two questions ; one speculative, the other practical.

(a) First of all, as to Jeremiah's attitude towards his country. It is quite evident that, to the great majority, to men with no spiritual insight and little outlook on life, Jeremiah, with such a message as he bore, must have seemed no better than the ill bird that fouls its own nest—a traitor to his country. It is quite as evident that others, who knew better, but no less disliked his uncompromising fidelity, found in it an easy handle by which to hold him up to scorn and hate. Nor has he wholly escaped the censure of later days. Reviewing his career in the light of its issues, some have denounced his conduct as unpatriotic, and therefore immoral. Now it may fairly be urged that a quarter of a century spent in service disinterested and ungrudging, should absolve him from such a charge. It may further be urged, that his bearing at this crisis, the evident sincerity of his tone, the way in which he sides with Hananiah against himself ("Amen, so be it !") is such as no political adventurer, no charlatan, would naturally assume. Kuenen's remarks are worth quoting : "The man whose toil and zeal for the true good of his people never flagged throughout his life, and who, at last, esteemed a share in his people's

reproach more highly than the treasures of Nebuchadrezzar and the luxury of the Chaldean court, this man was not wanting in love of his people." But for his full defence, we must go deeper. We must distinguish between the shallow, seeming Patriotism which consists in "crying up" one's own country, whatever she is, and "seeing her through" an emergency, however false and foolish the position she has assumed, and that real Patriotism which dreads no temporary eclipse of fortune so much as a permanent loss of moral force and fair fame. Mazzini, in a stirring address to the Italians of his day, reminds them that a country is not a mere zone of territory, but the idea to which it gives birth—an idea implying not only Brotherhood and Progress, but sacrifice of the material and accidental, of the mere form, for the essential and ideal good. As a matter of fact the State (in this respect like the Church) is of secondary importance. It exists for the more perfect development of the individual. Whenever social restraints threaten to repress the freedom of the spirit, we are face to face with Revolution—Peasants' Wars and Reign of Terror. Old forms, no longer adequate to man's growing needs, perish, and a new age of higher ideals sets in. The ideal State, as conceived by the individual, is always in advance of the actual State; and on the interval between them, depends the intensity of the conflict, and the rate of the progress made. No man ever loved Italy as Dante did—but it was Italy as he himself conceived her, enlightened and free. Through an Italy rent by strife and ruled by passion, he was content to move, sadly and proudly, as an exile. No man ever loved the Church as Luther did—but it was the Church that could offer peace of conscience and purity of heart to sinful men. Of these he found nothing, but only abstract truths and

empty forms, in the Church of Rome ; from which, therefore, he broke away, the arch-heretic of his day. To-day, the Italy of his dreams reveres the one, as Evangelical Christendom reveres the other. It is a cheap and easy way of discrediting a political rival, to brand him as "unpatriotic." There is always a presumption against those who raise such a cry. Every man whose patriotism is not shallow and spurious must, at times, recognize his country's faults, and do homage to the heroism and piety which seeks not to cover, but to amend them.

Jeremiah was the first of the Martyrs of Progress ; Posterity has amply vindicated his fame.

(b) "Thus saith Jahveh, Thou hast broken the bars of wood, but I have made them bars of iron." In giving Judah over to the King of Babylon, Jahveh's purpose was to chasten them for their sin, and so to draw them back to Himself. Heavy as were the calamities which had overtaken them, much might yet have been saved from the wreck of their fortunes, e.g. national existence, and, in the end, even national independence. But in resisting the decree of Heaven, and provoking the anger of a conquering race, they brought on themselves a judgment incomparably more severe, the ruin of their city and the extinction of their national life. They had broken the yoke of wood and it was replaced by a yoke of iron. It is ever so. In resisting discipline, we invite chastisement. In resisting chastisement, we invite judgment. In resisting judgment, we invite doom.

It is according to a gracious Providence, that our early years are spent amid the gentle restraints of home life. Where else is so kindly an eye turned on us, such generous allowance made for our infirmities, such care taken to temper severity with mercy, that



## CRITICAL NOTES ON CHAPS. XXVII. AND XXVIII.

Throughout chap. xxvii there are evident traces of original documents (see verses 2 and 12); on the other hand the Editorial hand is evident (*a*) in the inaccurate heading, and (*b*) the later forms of such names as Jeremiah and Nebuchadrezzar. The process of re-casting has been imperfectly carried through. The version of the LXX is simpler and more forcible. Professor W. R. Smith (in his *Jewish Church*) gives it the preference throughout. At points, on the other hand, there seem to be indications of a fuller text as represented by the M.T.

Verse 1. The reading is erroneous. Jehoiakim's name has been inserted instead of Zedekiah's (verse 12). In an amended, but still erroneous, form the heading reappears in chap. xxviii 1. The original heading of the whole section may still be recovered from xxviii 1: "In the fourth year, in the fifth month (i.e. of Zedekiah.)"

Verse 2. "Bands and yokes." We should read: Bands and bars, i.e. a yoke. Mótah may be used in the plural of the upper and lower bars, or in the singular (part for whole) of the whole yoke (xxviii, 10). This indifferent usage led to the misleading translation of our A.V. The meaning is not that the prophet made a number of yokes and forwarded them to high contracting Powers; but that he sent a formal message enforced by a reference to the yoke he himself wore.

Verse 6. Nebuchadnezzar. In chaps. xxvii, xxviii., xxxiv and xxxix, this later form of the name occurs. Nabu-Kururi-uzur, i.e. O Nebo, defend the land mark. "My servant." The LXX have found the word in their text, though they render it differently. It represents correctly enough the prophetic estimate of the brilliant career just opening. Cf. "Cyrus, mine anointed," in Isa. xl, 66.

Verse 7 is wholly absent from the LXX. Verse 8 is manifestly corrupt. It should read: And it shall come to pass that the nation that will not serve him and (his Son), that will not put their neck, etc. But even this is an attempt to confirm verse 7 in its place in the text by a reference to it in verse 8. The LXX read

verse 8 thus: And it shall come to pass that the nation that will not put their neck under the yoke of the King of Babylon, I will visit them, etc.

Verses 13, 14 are omitted in the LXX, except the close of verse 14: For they speak a lie unto you. W. R. Smith attaches oratorical value to the emphatic pronoun, They. He imagines the words "accompanied by a gesture, pointing to the false prophets." This seems to leave too much to the reader's imagination.

Verse 16. "Now shortly." Omitted in the LXX. On this, W. R. Smith remarks: It does not require these words to prove the prophets to have been false. For, taken with the context, they plainly meant to say that the alliance should defeat Nebuchadrezzar and recover the spoil." (*Jewish Church*, p. 118.) But cf. xxviii, 3.

## A LETTER TO BABYLON

### CHAPTERS XXIV AND XXIX

AFTER a brief reign of three months, Jehoiachin was carried captive to Babylon. With him went the Queen-Mother, the nobles and all the skilled workmen, smiths and wrights, leaving only the scum of the people to infest the streets of the capital. We shall have occasion in subsequent chapters, to note the altered relations between the prophet and those *nouveaux hommes*, who usurped the place of the old aristocracy, men with no religion, and with no self-restraint. For a time it seemed as if the interest of life, for the prophet, lay not in Jerusalem, but in Babylon. The kernel of the nation was there. There, if anywhere, might yet be found the stuff with which Jahveh might work deliverance for His people. This feeling, which no doubt was only temporary, explains the chapters we have now to consider.

In chap. xxiv, we have the record of a vision which came to the prophet early in the reign of Zedekiah. In form, it recalls chap. i ; in substance, it is evidently based on Amos' vision of the basket of summer fruits. The prophet sees two baskets of figs, the free-will offering, we may suppose, of two countrymen, placed before the Temple of Jahveh. The figs in the one basket were good, the first ripe figs, tender and juicy ; those in the other were naughty, i.e. nasty, mildewed and uneatable. In the former, the prophet sees the

exiles in Babylon ; in the latter, the rump of the nation left in Jerusalem.

[The first part of the chapter is, no doubt, based on some entry in the *Memorabilia* ; toward the close, the Editorial hand is manifest. Duhm finds here "an historical puzzle," which he confesses himself unable to solve. But the difficulty is largely of his own creation, and the solution he proposes seems, on the face of it, unsatisfactory. The racial distinctions, so acutely emphasized at a later date, between the Jews who returned from Babylon and those who never left the Holy Land, but intermingled in marriage with the Samaritans, and degenerated there, could scarcely be supposed to find an historic basis in the distinction between those Jews who went to Babylon under Jehoiakim, and those who went to Babylon, ten years later, under Zedekiah. It is more probable that the chapter was meant to indicate the moral difference between those Jews who returned from Babylon and the great majority who preferred to remain there ; the former being identified, perhaps on good grounds, with the descendants of the first Captivity and the latter with those of the second.

Erbt believes that the chapter belongs to the last period of our prophet's career, when he was in Egypt. But a comparison of this chapter with chap. xliv is not favourable to this view.]

It was to the exiles in Babylon that Jeremiah wrote the letter preserved for us in chap. xxix. A careful perusal of it, discovers the fact that the text has undergone important modifications in the process of transmission. The heading (verses 1-3) has been added. Verses 8-9 have been inserted, in anticipation of Verses 20-23. In verse 10, reference is made to "a good word of Jahveh" (see chap. xxiv. 6), with which the exiles cannot possibly have been familiar when this letter was written. Verse 15 connects, not with verse 16, but with verse 21. The intervening verses refer not to the exiles, but to the people in Jerusalem ; and the directness and emphasis with which they treat

of domestic affairs, suggest that the letter has been edited for circulation there. Verses 20-23 contain notes concerning two false prophets in Babylon, and the judgment to come on them. Finally, in verses 24-32 we have information as to the reception of the letter and a correspondence which ensued. If this analysis of the text is accepted, the letter originally ran thus:

Verse 4. "Thus saith Jahveh of Hosts, the God of Israel, unto all the Captivity which I have carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon. (5) Build ye houses and dwell in them, and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them. (6) Take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters, and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters, and multiply there, and be not diminished. (7) And seek the welfare of the city, whither I have carried you captive, and pray for it to Jahveh, for in the prosperity of the city ye shall prosper. (11) For I know the thoughts that I think about you, saith Jahveh, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. And ye shall call on Me and go and pray to Me, and I will hearken to you. (12) And ye shall seek Me and find Me, when ye shall seek Me with all your heart. And I shall be found of you,<sup>1</sup> saith Jahveh."

A perusal of this chapter, with a reference to the prophecy of Ezekiel, enables us to form an idea of the circumstances of these exiles in Babylon. They lived apart, forming a separate community, and maintaining, as far as it was possible, their national institutions. They still had among them the shadow of royalty, in the person of the deposed Jehoiachin.

<sup>1</sup> Or, as Driver renders it: I will let Myself be found of you. So the force of the Niph'al may be conveyed.

They were governed by their own elders. They could boast of prophets raised up in Babylon, as in Judah. They increased rapidly, not only in numbers, but in wealth ; and counted for something in the polities of Babylon. Meanwhile they followed, with deepest interest, the course of events that transpired in Judah, and expected a speedy return. Of the prophets in Babylon some, like Ezekiel, were heaven-sent : others, like Ahab and Zedekiah, mentioned here, had quite other origin, and scandalized even the heathen among whom they lived. There is a word-play, a touch of grim humour, in the short, sharp sentence which disposes of them (verse 22), "Ahab is the son of Koliah ; he and his companions shall be a curse (Kelala) to their countrymen ; because of their misdeeds Nebuchadrezzar shall roast them (VeKalam). The tone throughout is savage ; and one is glad to feel free to regard the passage as being, like much else in this chapter, non-Jeremian. The impression made by the prophet's letter on the majority of the exiles appears from the closing verses. He seemed to them a "mad fellow," an impostor ;<sup>1</sup> one whose proper place was in the stocks. To this effect Shemaiah wrote to the Temple authorities in Jerusalem. But Zephaniah was not Passhur ; and the prophet escaped a second infliction of the degrading punishment.

Had we the slightest disposition to regard Jeremiah as a brainsick enthusiast, we should be disabused by a perusal of this letter. No advice could be imagined more sane or more wholesome than that here addressed to his exiled compatriots. He urges them to lay aside all expectation of a speedy return, and to reckon, neither on a speedy reversal of Fortune, nor on a

<sup>1</sup> Note the Hithpa'el ; one who makes himself a prophet.

miraculous intervention of Providence on their behalf. Let them rather commend their religion to the heathen, by the peaceable fruits of good living, and themselves to Jahveh, by a cheerful submission to His will. An interesting parallel might be drawn between these Jews in Babylon and the primitive Christians of the Diaspora, also Jews, living under the shadow of what seemed to them an impending Second Advent. There was the same tendency to unrest and agitation. New spiritual forces came into conflict with old social relations and ideals, not without temporary dislocation of the machinery of life. So Paul, writing to the Thessalonians, bids them "study to be quiet, and to do their business, and to work with their own hands as he had commanded them." He reminds them that the Lord's Advent may not be so near as they fondly imagine, and closes with the prayer that they may be "directed into the love of God and the patient waiting for Christ." Such a view of the Christian's duty in regard to life, sanctioned by the double authority of the Old and New Testament, deserves our best attention.

The Church of Christ is still in exile; and no attempt to fuse the Church and the World, to resolve religion into culture or Humanity, can ever succeed. But the opposite extreme is just as dangerous. There is a tendency to look with indifference, if not with disapproval, on whatever is not distinctly religious; as if the line of duty and safety for the Church lay in the direction of aloofness from the world. There are Christians who are much more at home in the study of prophecy than in that of history; who take a keener interest in deciphering the Number of the Beast than in ridding the world of a single actual evil. In support of such a view of Christian duty, it is easy to plead apostolic example. But, while

a special vocation justifies the line of action it requires, it is surely plain that for the great majority of us, who have no special vocation, the path of duty lies in the direction of general principles applicable to all, such as are here enforced. It is not wise, in the enthusiasm of a first love, to frown on innocent pleasures and healthful sport as dangerous to Spirituality. It is not wise, in the interests of Sanctity, to impose monastic vows on men and women destined by nature for the married life. It is not wise, because our citizenship is in Heaven, to turn our backs on earth, and leave politics and great social problems for solution to the Devil. It is not wise in the interests either of the Church or of the World. Christianity is the Religion of Reconciliation ; and it is in the reaction of the material on the spiritual, of the secular on the sacred, that the Christian finds himself, and discovers the open secret of the Universe. The mystics speak of life " the Soul's passage through the Vanities of Time into the Treasures of Eternity."<sup>1</sup> The phrase, exquisite as it is, misses the moral meaning of life. " The Kingdom of Heaven is as a man taking his journey into a far country who called his servants and gave them ten pounds and said, Occupy till I come." Not merely as men, but as Christians, we have a stake in the world. Its moral and social conditions interest us profoundly ; and the interest is not less real because it is temporary. It has a direct bearing on the formation of Christian character ; it is the scaffolding within which the Temple is reared. The rails of progress always run along the lines of Providence ; and it is at our peril that we leave them.

Were we, however, to stop at this point, it is easy to see the possible result. Many of the Jews who,

<sup>1</sup> See Law's *Spirit of Prayer*.

acting on the prophet's advice, threw themselves into the life of the great city, sank into heathendom, so that, when the time came for them to return, they preferred to remain. If it is needful to grasp the right relations of the Church to the World, it is quite as needful to grasp that which is distinctive and essential in religion—the introduction of a Divine and eternal element into Life. “I know my thoughts toward you, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a Future and a Hope.”

A Future and a Hope. The phrase is striking in its intentional vagueness. No attempt is made by the prophet to fill in the outline or define the prospect. In all hope there is something subtle and elastic, something that baffles thought and eludes expression. It is a pervasive atmosphere, at once near and far. It quickens the slumbering instincts in the soul, while it softens the distant horizon of life and history. Jahveh Himself is His people's Hope, and prepares them, by His presence, for the Future, of which He is the pledge. In the same way St. Paul, writing to the Christians of his day, mainly Jews, living in the great Babylon of the West, says: “We are saved by hope,” and again: “Hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts.” Certainly our aim as Christians is not to narrow down the interests of life, shutting out of it everything that might compete with Religion; it is rather to introduce Christ, so that everything may find its proper place and value in relation to Him. The premier problem of the Christian life is not one of Proportion, More or Less; it is one of intuition, how to grasp the Divine in the human, and, by the thought of the Eternal, once for all to do justice to the things of time.

But must not the introduction of the Eternal dwarf

the things of time, and so rehabilitate the false spirituality we have sought to discredit ? Not necessarily. It is true you cannot build with any effect against the sky ; nor, as Mr. Ruskin says, contend with masonry against a mountain. “ It would not be well to build pyramids in the valley of Chamounix ; and St. Peter’s, among its many other errors, counts for not the least injurious, its position on the slope of an inconsiderable hill.” But see how a village nestles in the lap of a mountain, whose summit is lost among the clouds ; while these, in turn, blend softly and quite imperceptibly with the sky. Here is neither conflict nor contrast, but concession easy and natural, of less to greater, in which, at every step, it is the less that gains. So it is in life. So long as we set the things of time in sharp contrast to the Eternal, they are bound to suffer ; but when we grasp the thought of history as the Evolution of a Divine Purpose with dim far-reaching and eternal issues, the smallest detail becomes significant. What is needed, to save us from the besetting littleness of Life, is just that which religion gives, a Future and a Hope. What Background is to a picture, Outlook is to life.

This conception of Life, according to which the value of the Present depends on its outlook into the Future, receives abundant confirmation in daily life. A child lives intensely in the Present. “ Heaven lies about him in his infancy,” and the light reflected from the distant hills lends a charm to every simple joy. But as we grow older, the gates of the morning close on us ; narrowing prison walls shut us in. Sometimes it seems a merciful providence that a man’s interest in life declines with his share in it ; till, as the one touches zero, the other becomes a minus quantity, and he sinks into the grave with scarcely

a regret. There is just one escape from this process of gradual extinction. Born of the Spirit, we realize that we are the children of God. As earth shrinks about us, Eternity unfolds within. With less of the old passionate clinging to life, we come to look on it more kindly, to handle it more reverently, to question it more hopefully. Others may talk despondingly of a decadent age ; to him who has seen God, the future is always bright. What seems failure is only the retreat of the wave, while all the time the tide is rising ; an eddy in the stream, whose current sets, swift and strong, from the heights behind to the great Deep before. God has given him a Future and a Hope.

## A HYMN OF PRAISE

### CHAPTERS XXX-XXXIII

WE come now to what is perhaps the most interesting and important section in the whole book. The chapters before us have been described by Ewald as a Book of Consolation ; but they are more. Full as they are of poetry, patriotism, and religious feeling, we may describe them as a great Hymn of Praise, an Anthem of Redemption. No doubt the reader will be disappointed to learn that these beautiful chapters, instead of lying open to the foot of Faith, are shut in by a thorny fence of critical questions, through which he must fight his way, if he will enjoy this Eden of delight ; that each chapter and verse, in turn, must be examined, while we sift the original, and prophetic, from the later, Editorial, matter. He will be further disappointed to learn that considerable diversity of opinion prevails among some of the most competent critics on many of the issues that must be raised. It is only approximately that results can be reached. It may prepare us for a dispassionate and impartial discussion of the questions before us, if we bear the following points in mind.

(a) Let us consider what it is natural to expect from one in the circumstances in which Jeremiah is supposed to write. A national catastrophe is impending ; the city is already invested by the Chaldeans ; the people are wasted by famine and disease. He

himself is shut up in a prison, in daily peril of his life. These are not the circumstances in which one expects elaborate and ornate diction, honeyed rhetoric such as we find here. Rather we expect a bare statement of simple elementary truths, flashes of thought, jets of feeling, with occasional visions of a brighter future melting away into the surrounding gloom. Now if the critical method, eliminating here and there a purple passage, washing out some of the vivid colouring with which these pages glow, leaves us just what we had expected to find, let us do it justice, and own it as the friend of truth. After all, what remains, if less in bulk, less brilliant in colouring, may yet preserve all that is essential in these chapters. We sweep away the over-soil, but the rock remains with its veins of precious metal and its springs of living water.

(b) Let us further consider that what we may no longer regard as part of the original prophetic text, is not on that account lost to us, nor does it cease to form part of the Sacred Record. What we discover—and surely we lose nothing by admitting it—is, that the ground we are traversing has already been traversed by men and women like ourselves, who have mingled their tears with the pure water of this well of life, and woven the luxuriance of their own religious experience, their doubts and fears, their hopes and triumphs, about this monumental record of an earlier age. From a literary point of view the merit of these insertions may not be great; but their spiritual value alone concerns us here. We do not reject silver because it is not gold; nor water, because it is not wine. To some, an echo may convey more than the voice itself. Some may be cheered by the reflection, who might have been blinded if they had faced the sun. There may be some who will

find in the commonplaces of a later age that familiar tone, that touch of kindness and sympathy, they might have missed in the bolder utterance of an earlier and more heroic age.

## THE PRELUDE

### CHAPTER XXX

CHAP. XXX forms the Prelude of the Hymn of Praise ; and, like all preludes, was written after the work it is meant to introduce. It aims at gathering up, in an easy tentative way, the various themes which are elaborated, with more of fullness and dramatic intensity, in chaps. xxxi-xxxiii. A few remarks must here suffice.

Verses 1-5. The author cannot possibly imagine that he has made a complete collection of the prophet's works.<sup>1</sup> Probably he claims to have given here a fair statement of the prophet's many-sided message ; and in this, on the whole, he is justified. But evidently it was not anticipated that these chapters should lie alongside of chaps xxv. and xxxvi. Originally the Hymn of Praise was meant to stand alone. The key-note to the whole piece is struck at once, viz., the Reunion of the Tribes. For long divided, scattered, alienated, Israel and Judah were again to be one, as the Covenant people ; the memory of earlier and superficial divisions being lost in the sense of a common redemption. Along with the Reunion of the Tribes, goes the Restoration of the Land as the seal and symbol of the Covenant between them and Jahveh.

Verses 5-7. A brief poetic piece follows, in the familiar Jeremian measure, though not from Jeremiah's hand.

<sup>1</sup> " Write thee all the words that I have spoken unto thee in a book " (verse 2).

Verse 5. We have heard the sound of a tremor,  
Panic, and no peace.

Verse 6. Ask, now, among the nations and see,  
Can a male be with child ?  
Wherefore do I see every man  
With hands on loins ?  
And why are all faces turned  
To deadly pallor ?

Verse 7. Alas, for great is that day,  
Whence any like it ?

\* \* \* \* \*

Yea, 'tis a time of sore travail for Jacob,  
But he shall be saved from it.

The poem describes an age of unrest and confusion. It has been thought that we have here a reflection of the Persian age, on the eve of Xerxes' expedition against Greece.<sup>1</sup> "The gathering of tremendous armies from all the lands for a decisive conflict, may well have struck terror into the hearts of the Jews." That is quite probable, and indeed nearly certain, in the light of later verses. The point is that the features of that later Persian age are reflected on the earlier pre-Exilic age, without much thought of historic truth. For example ; the captivity of the North began a century before that of the South ; yet, as the writer looks back on these great events, through the vista of history, the intervening century disappears, and they seem to coincide, "a day of sore travail for Jacob," i.e., for the whole nation.

Verses 8-11. The passage is a mosaic of quotations. Thus, verse 8 is borrowed from Isaiah x, 27, little pains having been taken to fit it into the context ; hence the perplexing changes from the second to the third person in the verse. From Hosea comes verse 9. The phrase, "David his King," does not, of course,

<sup>1</sup> Schmidt, *Encyclopaedia Biblica*.

anticipate a resurrection of the founder of his dynasty. The words merely imply one of David's house, and, perhaps, one cast in the same heroic mould. They suggest the age of Zechariah, when hopes of a revival of the monarchy in the person of Zerubbabel were rife. But such language was current at a much later date. Compare Ps. cxxxii, Zech. xii, (which belongs to the Maccabean age), and the popular émeute in our Lord's day, as recorded by St. Matthew xxi, 9.

Verses 12-17. Another poetic fragment strongly impregnated with Jeremian phrases, but without his directness or originality; meant to emphasize the fact that the sufferings of the people are the result of their sins.

Verse 12. Woe is me, for thy ruin is hopeless;  
Grievous is thy wound.

Verse 13. There is no healing for thy sore,  
No soundness in thee.

Verse 14. All thy lovers have forgotten thee,  
They seek thee not.  
For I have smitten thee as a foe smiteth,  
And chastised thee cruelly.

Verse 15. Yea, for the multitude of the transgressions  
Have I done these things to thee.

The style has been vitiated by insertions. For example; in the original, verse 13 reads: "There is none to plead thy cause, there are no medicines for thy sore, there is no plaster for thee."<sup>1</sup> The introduction of a judicial phrase ("to plead thy cause") into the heart of this diagnosis of the moral condition of the people, is quite inappropriate. On the other hand, in a prose note at the close of verse 17, we find a phrase, a simple artless touch, which as exactly reflects the condition of Jerusalem during the captivity,

<sup>1</sup> See Driver's translation.

and for long after it, as it is inappropriate to the pre-Exilic age when Jerusalem was a bone of contention to her neighbours, and the theatre, as we have seen, of a great international struggle: "They have called thee Zion whom no man seeketh after."

Verses 18-22. This is undoubtedly the most important fragment of the chapter. It consists of three stanzas of four lines, each with three accented syllables; and a brief addition in prose.

Verse 18. See, I will restore Jacob's captivity,  
And have compassion on his dwelling places.  
And the city shall be builded on her site,  
And the palace duly tenanted.

Verse 19. And merry voices shall sound from out them.  
I will multiply, and not 'minish them.  
I will honour them, nor lay them low.  
And I will visit all her oppressors.

Verse 20. And their sons shall be as of old.  
And their congregation established before Me.

Verse 21. And their leader shall be of their own stock,  
And their ruler hail from their own border.

The points to be noted are as follows: First, the ecclesiastical constitution of the State, which is now, like Scotland during the Reformation period, a Congregation (verse 20). Again, instead of King or Princes, we have leaders and rulers;<sup>1</sup> and these are no more alien by birth, but of her own sons. Most important of all is the brief prose addition (verse 21), which indicates that, at the time this chapter was written, Judah was under priestly rule: "I will cause him, i.e. the ruler, to draw near, and he shall approach unto me." The hard and fast line between the civil and ecclesiastical is no more. It was at

<sup>1</sup> Both words occur frequently in Nehemiah, post-Exilic phrases.

his peril, "pawning his life," that a king like Uzziah presumed to invade the Sanctuary. But after the Exile, the civil and secular were combined. Owing to a certain ambiguity as to the reference of the pronominal suffixes, the LXX render thus: I will cause them to approach, and they shall draw near to me; referring the promise to the whole people. The meaning would then be that the theocratic ideal was at last to be realized in a priestly nation. But this is not grammatically defensible.

The Reunion of the Tribes, the Restoration of the Land, and the Reorganization of the National Life; such are the leading ideas stirring in the writer's mind. To these we may add a fourth, underlying all the rest, implied rather than expressed here, the re-affirmation of the old and gracious relations between Jahveh and His people which, if not ended, were suspended during the exile; in other words, the Renewal of the Covenant. These four we may regard as the leading motifs in the great Hymn of Praise which we are now to study.

[Critical note on verse 19, "Thanksgiving and the voice," etc.; so, in the M.T. But if "Thanksgiving" had belonged to the original text, it must have followed *Kôl* (the voice). We omit it. The last line of verse 19 may be recovered from verse 18.

Verse 19. "Nor lay them low"; literally, nor shall they be of small account (see Driver's translation). *רַיִשׁ* is used of the younger son, but also in a more general sense (Cf. Psalm cxix, 141; and cf. Job xiv, 21) of any one fallen from greatness.

## THE REUNION OF THE TRIBES

### CHAPTER XXI, 1-26

**A**SINGLE verse of prose serves as a link between the Prelude and the first Movement of the Hymn of Praise, of which the theme is the Reunion of the Tribes. "At that time, saith Jahveh, I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be My people."

Graf and Ewald believe that in chap. xxxi we have one of the earliest utterances of Jeremiah, and compare it, in matter and form, with chap. iii. The correspondence is striking, but not less so is the difference. In his early years the prophet addressed himself to the North with a gospel of forgiveness which was definitely conditioned, while his whole soul was thrown rather into the call to Repentance than into the promise of Restoration. We recognize in him at that time a practical Reformer, dealing with hard facts, particularly with the stubborn heart of unbelief in Israel, which had proved a persistent and hopeless hindrance to the grace of God. Now he is shut up in his prison, dealing no more as a practical Reformer with an impenitent people, but directly and personally, as a Believer, with the promises of God. The springs of fancy are loosed, and he wanders at will in a dream-land of his own creation. Shadowy forms and sweet childish faces gather round the old man. Voices mingle with his dreams, now tuned to triumph and joyful praise, now low and broken, like a child's voice sobbing out his confession at his father's knee. What

might have been, what must yet be, is realized, and grace reigns over all.

Verse 2. For this is Jahveh's oracle ;  
     I found them in the wilderness—  
     A people reserved from the sword.  
     Up, lead him into rest !

Verse 3. From far off Jahveh hath appeared  
     In's kindness to me.  
     Yea, with an ancient love I have loved thee,  
     And therefore drawn thee.

Verse 4. Again I'll build thee, and thou shalt be built,  
     Oh, Israel's virgin !  
     With tabrets deck thee, and go forth  
     In dance of merry makers.

Verse 5. And yet again thou'l plant with vines  
     Samaria's hill.  
     The planters plant, they gather grapes,  
     In praise of Jahveh.

Verse 6. Comes a day when the watchmen cry  
     On Ephraim's Mount :  
     Arise, and let's go up to Zion,  
     To Jahveh, our God.

Jeremiah's conception of the history of the North, is original in the highest degree. What to the historian seemed the punishment of Israel's sin,<sup>1</sup> the prophet regards as a merciful dispensation of Providence. The Northern tribes, "reserved from the sword," had escaped the far heavier calamities which fell on Judah, and were now prepared to enter afresh into the Covenant Bond. The Divine purpose realizes itself : "Up, lead him into rest." The prophet sees among them the stir of a new departure. A sense of distance oppresses the exile's heart, as he turns toward home. Hope revives, for Jahveh appears ; but it is, as yet, like day-break on distant mountains. To Jahveh,

<sup>1</sup> See 2 Kings xviii, 6-18.

on the other hand, is neither near nor far. In the greatness of His ancient love, which links the past of the people with their present, He is ever near. They speak of Him as far off ; but, from the depths of their own heart, directly and as one close at hand, He answers them : “ Yea, I have loved thee.” After such an experience as they had passed through, a sense of uneasiness and uncertainty might naturally infect their religious life ; but permanence is always the mark of a work of grace. Their tenure of the land to which they returned, shall be fixed and undisputed. According to Lev. xix, 23, the fruitage of the first three years was considered unclean ; only in the fourth year was it consecrated and rendered fit for food. According to an earlier and simpler code,<sup>1</sup> Nature, in her virgin state, is holy ; only under certain conditions and after a certain interval, was it lawful to profane her, i.e. to rob her of her fruits. Our prophet takes the latter view, and in the promise : “ The planters plant, and gather grapes (literally, “ plant and profane”), he thus ensures to them a quiet and uninterrupted possession of their land. In verse 6 the Northern tribes are seen going up in pilgrim bands to the capital to keep the yearly feast. They return to the ancient fold and fellowship of the Faith. In the dim morning light, the watchman’s voice is heard rousing the camp.

Verses 7-14. In the next piece, also poetic, the measure varies. We have a succession of massive stanzas, each of six lines, with three accented syllables in each line. The outlook widens ; the theme is the return of the exiles, North and South alike, from captivity. The passage is quite in the style of the great post-Exilic prophet, and has been largely influ-

<sup>1</sup> Deut. xx, 6, and 28-30.

enced by him. Thus, compare verse 8 with Isa. xlvi, 16; verse 9 with Isa. xli, 10, lx, 10, lxiii, 13; verse 10 with Isa. xlix, 1, and xl, 11; verse 12 with Isa. li, 11, and lviii, 11. In addition to these parallels, the prominence given the priesthood (verse 14), the absence of any reference to the royal House, and the introduction of a distinctly liturgical element (verse 7), point in the direction of a post-Exilic origin. The author is unknown; evidently a diligent student of contemporary literature, and not without powers of sympathetic apprehension and graceful reproduction.

Verse 7. For this is Jahveh's oracle;  
 Sing ye with joy for Jacob,  
 And shout for the chief of the nations.  
 Spread the tidings, raise the paean, say:  
 Jahveh hath saved His people,  
 Even the remnant of Israel.

Verse 8. Behold, I bring them from the North,  
 And gather them from the earth's ends.  
 The blind and the lame are with them,  
 The child-bearing and travailing together.  
 A great company, they shall return  
 (And shall seek Jahveh, their God).

Verse 9. Behold they come with weeping,  
 And with supplications will I lead them.  
 I will lead them by the rivers of water,  
 In a straight way where they shall not stumble.  
 For I am to Israel a Father,  
 And Ephraim is my first-born.

Verse 10. Hear the word of Jahveh, ye nations,  
 And publish it afar off 'mong the islands:  
 He that scattered Israel shall gather him,  
 And tend him as a shepherd doth his flock.

Verse 11. For Jahveh hath redeemed Jacob  
 From the hand of one stronger than he.

Verse 12. They shall come and sing on Zion's heights,  
 And shall flow to the goodness of Jahveh,  
 For corn and wine, and for the oil.

The yearnings of the flocks and herds  
 Their soul is a garden well-watered  
 Nor shall they languish any more.

Verse 13. The virgin then shall rejoice in the dance.  
 The young men and the amorous shall be glad  
 I will turn their sadness into singing  
 And for mourning I will give them mirth  
 I'll steep in fat the souls of priests  
 And satisfy my folk with goodness

Verses 15-20. Another Jeremian fragment meets us. Again the outlook narrows: the interest centres on the North.

Verse 15. Hearken, a mourning is heard at Ramah  
 A passion of tears.  
 Rachel, weeping for her children,  
 Refuseth to be comforted

Verse 16. Refrain thy voice from weeping;  
 And thine eyes from tears.

Not all in vain shall be thy travail.

Verse 17. They'll come again from th' enemy's land.

Verse 18. Have I not certainly heard  
 Ephraim bemoan himself?  
 "Thou didst chastise me, and I was chastised  
 As an untamed bullock.  
 Oh, fetch me home that so I may return,  
 For Thou'rt my God.

Verse 19. See now, grown wise, I did repeat  
 And smote upon my thigh.  
 I also was ashamed in bearing  
 My youth's reproach

Verse 20. Is Ephraim a darling son?  
 A precious child?  
 For, often as I speak against him,  
 I yet remember him.  
 So, then, My heart is stirred for him,  
 I'll surely pity him.

More than any other figure in Hebrew history, that of Rachel was honoured and loved. The seven years

during which her sweet face shone down, like a star, on the tent of the lonely herdsman could never be forgotten. Her youth, her beauty, the keenness of her wit, lent her a peculiar charm ; and all was hallowed by her early death. She died near Bethel at Ephrath.<sup>1</sup> Her grave must have been near the road which leads Southward from Bethel, where it is crossed by that which leads Eastward from Ramah to Gibeon.<sup>2</sup> It was identified so late as the time of the Judges ; and, no doubt, was pointed out in the prophet's day. It is a stately and mournful figure he sees, hovering over that wayside grave—Rachel weeping for her children, renewing the sore travail of which she died, while she waits for their return. Nor does she wait in vain : “ They'll come again from th' enemy's land.” From Rachel, the mother, the prophet turns in thought to the children, naming Ephraim as leader and representative of the Northern tribes. The rapid development of the Northern kingdom had been too early arrested. Hence the prophet regards Ephraim as “ bearing the reproach (or penalty) of his youth.” Affliction has done its work, and, in imagination, he hears the penitent appeal of the people ; then Jahveh responds. Thus in the very heart of the Old Testament we meet the parable of the Prodigal Son. Prophecy and parable alike find their inspiration in the spiritual history of the race, man's experience of God's grace.

In the history of Israel the Northern kingdom very

<sup>1</sup> See Genesis xxxv, 19. What follows (“ Which is Bethlehem ”) is a later and erroneous insertion.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. 1 Sam. x, 2. What follows in verse 3 (“ In the plain of Tabor ”) should be read : By the oak of Deborah. Cf. Genesis xxxv, 8. See Graf's paper, in *Studien u. Kritiken*, 1854.

soon reached a point of greatness which Judah never regained after the days of Solomon. Indeed, in point of literature and art, of commerce and empire, there could be no comparison between the two. For a century under the House of Omri, and again through the long and brilliant reign of Jeroboam II, Ephraim was the predominant partner in the national life. Even the strong hold of the House of David on the hearts of the people could not prevail against it. It is probable that in the political forces, the prejudices and presumptions, which centred round this Hegemony of Ephraim, the prophets found the one insuperable barrier in the way of their policy of reunion. It was always part of their programme that, when the Spirit was poured out from on high, this barrier should be removed. "Ephraim shall no more vex Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim." By birth a Benjamite, our prophet belonged to the North, though his working days had been spent in the capital ; and, while on Deuteronomic grounds, he regards Jerusalem as the religious centre of the nation, he willingly accords to Ephraim a premier place not only in the councils of the nation but in the Covenant of their God. How infectious this wise and generous spirit proved, we may see from an echo and confirmation of the prophet's ideal in a poem, already studied, by an Exilic poet : "Ephraim is my first-born" (verse 9).

It is not needful to ask whether, or how far, this programme was actually carried through in Jewish history. The spirit of it is the very essence of Christianity. Christ died at Jerusalem ; and Christian theology centres in the city, and the Temple, and the altar. But His youth was spent in Galilee ; and the Galilean spirit, simple and free, artistic and progressive, has given its distinctive note to the Ethics of the

Gospel. When, on the persecution which rose after Stephen's death, the apostles were driven from Jerusalem, it was to Samaria they turned their steps, and there the Gospel won her earliest trophies. Thus again the prophet's words came true: Ephraim is my first-born.

Another short extract (verses 21, 22) refers, like verses 7-14, to the return of the Exiles from Babylon.

Verse 21. Set up the way-marks,  
 Erect the sign-post.  
 Turn thy heart to the high way,  
 The way thou wentest.  
 Return, O virgin of Israel,  
 Unto these thy cities.

Verse 22. How long wilt thou gad about,  
 Apostate daughter ?

The idealism of the prophet is absent here; and the erection of sign-posts to mark the way, indicates one more familiar with the physical difficulties than with the moral significance of the Return. This is followed by a brief enigmatic oracle couched in prose: "For Jahveh hath created a new thing in the earth; the woman compasseth the man." If we put aside the fanciful explanation of Hitzig, who regards Israel as the maid, and Jahveh himself as the man to whom she clings with the fond endearment of a true and humble penitent, the words can only mean that the Messianic age shall be one of profound and unbroken peace. Just as in Saxon England it was said, that a woman with a babe at her breast might pass scatheless from sea to sea; so the writer foresees a time when, in Judah, a woman, with distaff in hand, shall keep the house and so protect the man.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Deut. xxxii, 10.

## CRITICAL NOTES ON CHAP. XXXI.

Verse 2. "For thus saith Jahveh." The Ki has dropped out. Cf. verse 7. "I found them." In the M.T. : "The people found grace (Hen)." But the LXX. read : *εὗρον θέρμον* (Hom) ; and suggest the reading adopted : *מִצְאָתֵם*.

Verse 26. "Up, lead them into rest" ; Infin. absol. for Imperative (*לְלֹאֵךְ*). The last word (Israel) is borrowed from verses 4 and 9.

Verse 3. "In's kindness to me." The word *Hesed* (kindness), which is found at the close of the verse, where it is syntactically difficult, belongs to the first half of the verse : *Hesed* Li (LXX *Lô*).

Verse 5b. "In praise of Jahve" ; based on the LXX (*φυτεύσατε καὶ αἰνέσατε*). So Duhm.

Verse 8a. "I bring them" ; reading Hiph'il participle with suffix. The verse lacks a line, which may be supplied (cf. chap. 1, 4). The last word belongs to verse 9.

Verse 13b. "The young men and ancients shall be glad." Ancients do not "join together" in the dance, as the present text suggests. The verb is *Chadah* = to rejoice.

Verse 16b. "Not all in vain," etc. ; literally, There shall be a wage for thy work. But the word for work means, rather, the fruit of work. In the second Isaiah it is always associated with wage, and both are referred to the Return of the Exiles as the fruit of Jahveh's redemptive agency (xl, 10, and lxii, 11). So here, reading *שְׁכָר וּפְטָלָה*.

Verse 18. Insert the interrogative particle.

Verse 19. The M.T. read : "Surely, after I was turned, I repented ; after I was instructed, I smote on my thigh." But the LXX read : Surely after my captivity, I repented. This, as Duhm suggests, may have been a gloss on the following phrase. Thus the verse is simplified. "See now, grown wise" = After I was instructed. The verb is used of the knowledge gained by experience. (Cf. Job xxi, 19, and Hos. ix, 7, Prov. x, 9.)

Verse 19b. Omit *Bōshти*.

## THE NEW COVENANT

### CHAPTER XXXI, 27-38

Chap. xxxi.

Verse 31b. And I will make, with the House of Israel,  
A new Covenant.

Verse 33b. And I will put My law in their mind,  
And write it on their heart.

And I will be to them a God,  
And they to Me a people.

Verse 34. Nor shall they any longer teach  
Each man his brother.

For all of them shall know Me,  
From their least to their greatest.

For I will forgive their transgression,  
And will remember it no more.

The outstanding feature in Jeremiah's programme of the Future is his doctrine of the New Covenant. All the rest depends on this. In point of style and phraseology, the passage is distinctly Editorial. We note particularly the phrase, the day is come, which occurs practically three times, and is usually the mark of later insertions ; also the purely negative, curiously conditioned and cumbrous, character of verse 32, quite unlike the direct and simple style of the prophet. On the other hand, the main idea is original and has proved its vitality by powerfully influencing the current of religious thought ever since. And though, as a whole, the passage is prosaic in form, there are rhythmic strains running through it which suggest that we have here the ruins of a prophetic oracle buried under the accretions

of centuries. So far as possible, I have indicated these above. It is, perhaps, not wonderful that an utterance, in itself so remarkable, should have attracted notice, and challenged the comments of later ages, and suffered from them. A parallel may be found in vii. 21-26.

## I

In the old Hebrew days a Covenant was made "with sacrifice." The victim was divided, and the principals passed together between the bleeding parts, imprecating a similar fate on themselves, should they prove unfaithful to their Covenant engagements. Hence "to cut a Covenant," is a familiar phrase.<sup>1</sup> It is probable that the word Berith should be derived from an Assyrian root which yields such other words as Birtu, a fetter, and Beritu, a fold; in which case the original idea of a Covenant is simply that of a Bond.<sup>2</sup> Covenants were made under various circumstances. As a rule they were made between two persons who contracted freely, e.g. Jacob and Laban. Sometimes a covenant was imposed by a greater on a less, as by a conqueror on a conquered city or people.<sup>3</sup> A man might make, on the other hand, a covenant with himself, as Job says: I made a covenant with mine eyes. When the covenant relation is transferred to the Divine, a certain indefiniteness invests it. In so far as God is the Universal ( $\tauὸ\ \piᾶν$ ), the covenant, like everything else He does, not only originates but

<sup>1</sup> Mainly on this account. *Berith* has been derived from Bara' (to hew or cut out). "But the symbolic act must follow, not precede, the actual relation; and covenants must have been made and broken many times before the need was felt to give them sacramental sanction." (A. B. Davidson, *Dict. of Bible*.) <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> e.g., Joshua ix. and 1 Sam. xi.

terminates with Himself. This seems to be the meaning of an obscure passage in the epistle to the Galatians : “ Now a Mediator is not a Mediator of one, but God is One.” On the other hand, as Creator and King of Israel, Jahveh has the right to impose terms and conditions on His people ; and, from this point of view, the Law and the Covenant are one.<sup>1</sup> So far, however, as men retain their freedom even in dealing with Heaven, the Covenant relation is mutual. This is naturally the view of the matter which prevails in the Old Testament. The point to be noted is, that, within the Covenant, freedom ceases on both sides, and mutual obligation begins. Jahveh undertakes to deliver His people and to dwell among them ; Israel, on their part, are bound to hearken to His voice and walk in His ways.

Such covenants were frequently made by God with men, as with Abraham, Levi, David. Each of these marks a fresh stage in the history of Revelation ; the gift of the land, the institution of the Priesthood and the Monarchy. On the other hand, they are all aspects, anticipations or developments, of the one Covenant made by Jahveh with Israel at Mount Sinai. Now, of course, some unambiguous declaration of the Divine purpose, some adequate demonstration of the Divine power, was required as the ground of the confidence which the Covenant implied. And, on the other hand, some startling and attractive display of the Divine character was needful to engage the affections of the people and dispose them to respond and to enter freely into the Covenant obligation. It is thus we explain the prominence given to the Exodus in the Covenant History. “ The Lord Thy God made with us a covenant at Horeb.” “ He fed thee in the wilder-

<sup>1</sup> See Exod. xxiv, 7.

ness with manna which thy fathers knew not. . . . Thou shalt remember thy God, and establish a Covenant." As Jahveh not only brought His people out from Egypt, but into Canaan, it was natural to regard that land as a pledge of the Covenant bond. It was held directly from Jahveh, on condition of loyalty to Him and for the celebration of His worship. In this sense it was the Holy Land.

The Covenant Relation is represented under various aspects ; as that of a shepherd to his sheep, of a king to his people, of a husband to his wife. But these are all hints and shadows of a relation transcending human thought. One formula alone gives adequate expression to it : " I will be their God, and they shall be My people." The subsequent history of Israel was governed by this conception of her relation to Jahveh. It underlies all that the earlier prophets have to say by way of warning and promise ; for Jeremiah, it was the ruling idea of his theological system.

But Israel had broken the Covenant. Like a faithless wife, she had forsaken Jahveh ; and, in so doing, had forfeited all claim to His protection. When therefore in her extremity she fled to Him, and fawned on Him, like Vivian with Merlin in the storm, feigning a sorrow she scarcely felt, it was easy for Him to disengage Himself from her embrace, with the reply, half scornful, half sad, " But where are the gods that thou hast made ? Let them up, if they can save thee." What Jahveh's relation was to the Covenant thus broken ; whether He could ever withdraw from engagements freely made, or resign to others the people chosen and redeemed for Himself ; these are questions our prophet never raises. When he speaks of a New Covenant, no doubt he implies that the old is obsolete. Yet the ground on which he builds

his hopes of the New, is that the Old can never be wholly undone, that Jahveh cannot prove unmindful of, or faithless to His own promise. What is certain is, that the Covenant is in suspense ; Jahveh has withdrawn from all friendly offices towards Israel. Hence the ills heaped in dire succession on the ill-starred people. Because of their sins the showers are withheld and the parched land powders under the scorching sun. Are they still impenitent ? The sword is added, and all the horrors of a siege. Is even this not enough ? Then the last divorce must follow. The people are driven from the land ; the seal of the Covenant is taken from them. Yet a remnant is left, a faithful few. At the worst the prophet has himself, his own religious experience, to fall back on. There is just one passage where it seems as if he felt that all was lost.<sup>1</sup> But the phrase must not be pressed, representing as it does a passing mood rather than a fixed conviction. For always, on the other side, there is the assurance that Jahveh cannot deny Himself, cannot disown His people or dishonour the throne of His glory. Again and again the plea is urged : “ Remember, break not the covenant.”

Nothing could be more remarkable than the indestructible vitality of the prophet’s faith. As an evidence of the Supernatural in Jewish history, no so-called miracle, no mere suspension of natural law, can compare with this Survival. Alone among the people, through the lingering agony of those last dark days, amid the ruins of the Temple and the city which stood for the existence of the nation, he held his own. With a splendid courage and an invincible hope, he sets

<sup>1</sup> Chap. v, 3. Phrases to the contrary effect, liberally scattered through the book (e.g. iv, 27 ; v, 10 and 18), are Editorial.

himself to the task of reconstruction. All that is essential in the Past is projected into the Future, to reappear transfigured and spiritualized. Forms and conditions vary; but, in aim and essence, the New is still the Old. "I will be their God and they shall be My people." "Tempora variata sunt, non fides."<sup>1</sup>

## II

We have now to see how the New Covenant differs from the Old, first, in general principle, and then in detail.

In verse 29 the prophet gives us a curious glimpse of contemporary thought. He quotes a saying, evidently proverbial among the people: "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." Ezekiel quotes the same proverb, as current among the exiles in Babylon. Its meaning is quite plain. If a man eat unripe fruit, he feels the result immediately and in his own person. His teeth are set on edge. But in the moral world it is not so. One sins, and others suffer. The proverb may be read as "a scornful gibe at the lameness and inequality of Providence,"<sup>2</sup> or as "a confession of sad perplexity in presence of the daily miscarriage of injustice."<sup>3</sup> One thing is certain. It implies a view of Providence which was bound to yield under new social forces, a view which must be replaced by some generalization, at once simpler and more profound. Hitherto Jahveh had dealt with Israel as a nation. It was only through the nation that the individual could realize himself as in relation to Jahveh. Perhaps it would be more exact to say that the individual was

<sup>1</sup> St. Augustine.

<sup>2</sup> Prof. Skinner (Ezekiel; *Expositor's Bible*).

<sup>3</sup> A. B. Davidson (Ezekiel; *Cambridge Bible*).

in that embryonic stage of development, when the foetus is as yet inseparable from the parent organism ; it had not yet come to birth. The social unit was the family, the tribe, or the nation ; the unit of time, not as with us the day, but a generation. Now Revelation is never far in advance of human experience. Hence the prophets, even when they scathe the sins of the individual, draw their inference in the direction of national responsibility ; and, when sin is visited, punishment falls not directly on the sinner, but preferably (because more strikingly, i.e. on a larger scale), on his children in successive generations. It seemed as natural to the prophets that the seven sons of Rizpah should die for Saul's breach of faith—seven black crosses, casting their shadow across the sunny harvest fields—as it seemed to Homer that the armies of Greece should be plagued for the wrath of their kings ; or to Sophocles, that the dutiful Antigone should expiate in exile the crimes of her ill-fated house.

But as life became more complex as the distinction between good and evil was accentuated, as men became conscious in themselves of the possibilities of both, and of the need for personal decision between them, some protest was inevitable. Because Manasseh sinned, why should Josiah fall, and the hopes of a nation perish with him ? “ Wilt thou destroy the righteous with the wicked ? ” On the other hand, how could their worship be acceptable, when the nation was no longer a spiritual unity, but an aggregate of opposite, and often contradictory, tendencies ? Thus slowly but surely the Individual came to birth.

Meantime other forces, mainly political, were working in the same direction. National independence had been lost ; the ten tribes were in exile ; the final catastrophe impending over Judah. Men were within

sight of a situation in which the first conditions of national worship should be wanting. It was at this critical point in Jewish history that the prophet found himself. Others might yield to the spirit of the age ; for him, Religion was already and necessarily a personal affair, communion with Jahveh. Starting thus with the Individual as his unit, it was possible to forecast the Universalism of the Future. He takes the words of mockery or despair from the lips of his contemporaries, and reads a challenge into them. Then he responds with a forward move : " In those days they shall not say, The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge ; but every man shall die for his own sins. The man that eateth sour grapes, his teeth shalt be set on edge." The New Covenant shall be no longer national, but personal.

Having made plain this very important point as to principle, we may now consider how the New Covenant differs from the Old in details.

(a) " This is the covenant which I will make with you. . . . I will put My laws in their inward parts and write them on their hearts." The Old Covenant was written on tables of stone. The most durable material at their disposal was chosen, to indicate the supposed permanence of the bond between Israel and Jahveh. It was surely then the irony of Fate that, ere they had reached the hands of the people, the tables of stone were cast on the ground and broken in pieces by the Law-giver. Such an incident is suggestive of the inherent weakness of all law. The more absolute its terms, the more hopelessly it alienates our sympathies and defeats its own aims. " By the law is the knowledge of sin." But the New Covenant is written on the heart, where it is impossible to reach behind it, so as either to defeat or depose it ; where it

acts no longer *ab extra*, by way of repression and restraint, but *ab intra*, as a motive power ; and where, from its central position, it may command every avenue of thought and feeling, and influence the life. When Jahveh requires of a man his heart, it is not as if religion were indifferent to all the rest ; as if it left conduct, which is nine-tenths of life, to look after itself. He will have the heart, that He may have the hand as well, the whole man placed at His disposal.

(b) "They shall not need to teach every man his brother, for all shall know Me." No polemic against the priesthood is intended here. The prophet does not mean, with a stroke of his pen, to abolish an ancient Order to which he himself belongs. A much profounder idea underlies his words. He will have us distinguish between that knowledge of God which is esoteric and technical, the possession of a class, and that which is the instinct of every renewed nature, i.e. between the ceremonial and the moral in religion. We shall never be in a position to claim independence of each other in our spiritual experience. It is "with all saints,"<sup>1</sup> i.e. in the communion of the Catholic Church, we come to know the Love which passes knowledge. Moral sense must be trained ; even conscience must be educated. But the education of conscience is one thing, and the imposition of creed or code is quite another. The one develops that individuality which the other tends to repress. The latter is excluded here. When he says : "They shall all know Me," it is probable that the prophet does not consciously overlook the limits of his age. By "all men" he means all Jews. But the relative Universalism he asserts, prepared for the absolute Universalism which

<sup>1</sup> Ephesians iii, 18.

is characteristic of the Gospel age. Christianity is aggressive and world-subduing, because it is the religion not of the letter but of the spirit. English customs and ideals can hardly cross the Channel. They can no more take root in Eastern lands than the Mosaic law could domesticate itself in our West. But the law of Truth is nowhere from home ; the thirst for God is part of the heritage of the race ; and it is to these the Gospel makes its appeal. As a revelation of God to the soul of man, Christianity is the absolute Truth, the universal Faith.

(c) A further note of the New Covenant is its finality. The illative form of the clause which follows suggests the fundamental condition of all that precedes it : “ *For I will forgive their iniquities.*” The Old Covenant was broken by the people’s sin ; nor could a new covenant be established unless some general act of amnesty were passed, removing the hindrance. But the clause does not refer only to the past. The Covenant relation cannot be re-established with any hope of permanence unless the act of amnesty be prospective as well ; unless, once and for ever, men are delivered from those guilty fears which paralyze the soul. “ *I will remember their sins no more.*” Nowhere in the Old Testament are we conscious of breathing the air of the Gospel, as we are here. It is in Jesus Christ we pass from condemnation, i.e. from the sphere of Law where condemnation is possible, into that of Grace, i.e. of fellowship with God based on forgiveness. Beneath the shadow of the Cross, the conflict with sin may persist ; but the sense of guilt is gone for ever. It is with interest we note how, for the Old Testament saint, the last appeal in the question of forgiveness, is not to the altar but directly to the heart of God. Daily, yearly, the altar reeked with blood ; yet man’s conscience was

not purged from sin. With dull monotony and deadening effect the consciousness of distance and alienation recurred. From these he turns to God Himself ; to find in Him the mystery of atonement and the ground of grace.

Spirituality, Universality and Finality ; such are the three notes of the New Covenant. The formula of the Old Covenant was : Thou shalt not. Those great words, like a flash of lightning, discovered to man what lies in the depth of his own being, moral obligation along with a sense of utter impotence to meet it, darkness and despair as of Chaos returning. The formula of the New Covenant is : I will ; still greater words, that discover the heights above, as it were the body of Heaven in its clearness, unruffled serenity and easy self-achievement of the Grace of God. It would not be possible to represent what is characteristic in each dispensation more vividly than by these contrasted formulas. On the one side, is a vain effort to attain ; a strife between the law of the mind and the law of the members ; a sense of hopeless duality that carries unrest—noble if you will, but not less fatal—to the centre of man's being. On the other side, is the rest of Faith, a great reserve of spiritual power, the reconciliation of Divine ideals with the practice of human lives achieved by grace. Moral obligation persists under the Gospel, but only as it is resolved into the higher freedom of the new life. As Pascal says : " The law demands what it cannot give ; grace gives all it demands."

The verses which follow (35-37), whilst certainly not prophetic, are interesting as the commentary of a later age on the classic passage we have been studying. To an Eastern mind, accustomed to cloudless noons and the brilliance of the midnight sky, these are God's

speech, a natural sacrament or oath confirming the covenant of His Grace. Nor are they wholly inaudible even to us. Readers will remember the good Abbé, to whom Victor Hugo introduces us, whose custom it was "to prepare for sleep by meditation in presence of the grand spectacle of the starry heavens. He did not seek to comprehend the incomprehensible ; he gazed into it. He did not study God ; he was dazzled by Him."<sup>1</sup> That is an experience we may all cultivate. To be dazzled by the thought of God, is to be blinded to the fear of man and much else in life that is equally shadowy and spectral. The sun still shines ; the moon and stars still rule the night, and "by their mild persistence urge men's thoughts to vaster issues." So, at least, believes the author of these verses. "Thus saith Jahveh who giveth the sun for a light by day and the ordinances of the moon and stars for a light by night. If these ordinances depart from before me, saith Jahveh, then the seed of Israel shall cease from being a nation before me for ever" (verses 35, 36). But doubt dies hard ; and, in verse 37, we see Faith still fighting for her life. God is not a man that He should lie. Even the ordinary course of His providence transcends our powers of comprehension ; and how much more the mystery of His grace ? "Thus saith Jahveh, if Heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth sought out, I will also cast off the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith Jahveh."

Verses 38-40. The covenant being renewed, the city rises from her ashes once more. The topography of Jerusalem is exceedingly difficult, and results are, at best, inferential. If this is so of the actual Jersualem in which the prophet lived, it is naturally more so of the ideal Jersualem which he sees rising before his eyes. From the

<sup>1</sup> *Les Misérables.*

Tower of Hananeel (i.e. N.E. point) to the Corner Gate (N.W.) the wall is built.<sup>1</sup> The measuring line continues southward<sup>2</sup> over the hill Gareb (an unknown point), then turns Westward by Goah (also unknown), thus describing the Southern border of the city. Finally it trends Northward by the brook Kedron. Not only the precincts of the city, but its surroundings, "the whole valley," accursed by the memory of its bloody rites and desecrated by the symbols of death, is reclaimed as a Sanctuary. When a mighty angel is deputed, rod in hand, to be the architect of a city<sup>3</sup> we need not wonder if a prophet consents to be the clerk of works. It must however be confessed that the verses form an anti-climax where they stand; and that the probabilities are in favour of their post-Exilic origin.

A passing notice of verse 27 must close our study of this passage. The reference to chap. i, 10, is unmistakable. To the prophet himself, or to one of his commentators, it seemed as if, in connexion with the New Covenant, we might see a fulfilment of his youthful visions and early hopes. It seemed as if already a breath of Spring were passing over the land, and the gracious purposes of Jahveh for Israel were blossoming. "It shall come to pass that, as I waked over them to pull down and root up, so I will wake over them to build and to plant, saith Jahveh."

### III

The reader scarcely needs to be reminded how powerfully the passage before us has affected the development of religious thought. When we speak of the Old and New Testaments, we follow the prophet's lead, and group the history of the race round two great centres,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Zech. xiv, 10.      <sup>2</sup> Reading Négbô, for Negdô. So Giesebrecht.

<sup>3</sup> See Zech. ii.

Mount Sinai and Mount Calvary, the deliverance from Egypt and the Redemption from Sin. At three points in the New Testament, this classic passage reappears.

(a) "On the night when He was betrayed, our Lord took bread and brake it, and gave it to His disciples. In like manner after supper, He took the cup, saying, This cup is the New Covenant in My blood shed for many, for the remission of sins." We might regard these words as implying no more than the confirmation of God's gracious purpose to His people. But the emphasis laid on the Blood, on actual suffering rather than on witness borne, seems to carry us further. It is probably inevitable that we should regard the passion of our Lord, from the point of view of the Mosaic Law, as a sacrifice, but it is all the more needful to remember that such categories, borrowed from the Old Testament, fall short of New Testament realities. We can never unsay the solemn appeal made by our prophet, who in this represents the Old Testament at its highest and best, from the altar to God Himself. No mere fact can be the final resting-place of Faith. The Spiritual cannot be adequately expressed in terms of the Material. What we see in the Cross is not so much physical suffering as redeeming love. It is the antinomy of good and evil, which has marked the history of our race from the first, carried up into the heart of God, and finding its final solution there ; not a death, but the Conquest of Life.

(b) In an interesting passage in 2 Corinthians, St. Paul speaks of the believer as a living epistle written, not like the first covenant, on tables of stone, but, like the New Covenant, on the tables of the heart ; and, from this contrast, deduces the characteristic features of a Gospel ministry, its sincerity and spirituality and permanence. (c) Again, the writer to the Hebrews, quot-

ing this Old Testament passage at length, teaches us how, within the New Covenant and in virtue of the death of Christ, we are already under the power of the world to come and in possession of all spiritual blessings.

But it is not only the language and thought of the New Testament that have been influenced by this passage. There is no period in English history which better repays study than the first half of the seventeenth century. Whatever may be our theological and political bias, we may well afford to do justice to the rugged strength, intellectual alertness, and moral elevation of Puritan England. Between that period and the age when Jeremiah lived, it is not difficult to draw a striking parallel. The discovery of the New World, the Revival of Learning, the growth of Parliamentary Institutions had revolutionized men's lives. The old traditions of religious thought and social order had gone hopelessly to pieces ; and men were left, groping among the wreckage for something better to which to entrust their souls. They had outgrown the political ideals of the Feudal age, they found themselves outside the Church, which claimed alone to offer acceptable worship ; and yet they were burdened by obligations which their own success entailed on them. What had happened was this ; once again, after centuries of political and intellectual nonage the Individual had come to birth. Moreover, as M. Lowell has said, the English translation of the Bible had to a large extent "judaized" the temper of the age. Under such circumstances it was not wonderful that men should revert to that conception of Religion which originated in an age so like their own. The form of Religion to which that strong, stern age most naturally wedded itself was the Covenant Theology.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is one of the great services which J. R. Green has ren-

Puritan England has produced two writers unsurpassed for originality of thought and majesty of style ; both of whom were, if not made, at least strongly marked by the Covenant Theology. Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* reflects on every page the loneliness of the religious life as then experienced, and the sense of tremendous issues involved in it. Apollyon straddles across the Pilgrim's path ; the shadow of Death lies darkly on his way ; Hell opens its mouth at his very side ; while, from the Delectable Mountains, he catches glimpses of the Celestial City which ravish his soul. Light and shadow are alike intense. Meanwhile, as he kneels by the Cross, he receives from the shining ones a roll which contains no philosophic generalizations as to the attributes of God or of the tendencies of history, but the assurance of his personal salvation. In a beautiful passage, the author describes the joys of the Land of Beulah, where the Covenant of Peace was renewed.

Milton dedicates his stately and sonorous verse to the same high theme. Milton's Satan is a magnificent impersonation of the spirit of his own age, with its abuse of new-found Freedom. On the other hand, we see the "Trinal Unity at Heaven's High Council Table" absorbed in those ineffable communings which issue in the Covenant of Grace. It is true, as Pope says, that Milton makes the Almighty "reason like a schoolman." He charms his heavenly hierarchies with what, as we read it, seems very like a metrical version of Calvin's Institutes. Yet the choice of such a theme, so utterly transcending human thought, witnesses to

dered to the student of English History that he has shown the natural connexion between the Theology of Calvinism and the Renaissance which preceded. See a remarkable passage (too long to be quoted here) in vol. iii, pp. 12 ff.

the supremacy of the religious interest at the time, and the particular line it followed.

Beside these two great writers, we may place the Puritan General, the inarticulate soul of Oliver Cromwell, never so incomprehensible as when he labours to unburden himself in words, but drawing from the same lofty theme the inspiration of a life as great in deeds as theirs in speech. I do not know a more striking passage than that in which Carlyle describes the Protector's death. "Oliver, we find, spoke much of the Covenants, which were, indeed, the grand axis of all in that Puritan Universe of his. Two Covenants, one of works, with fearful judgments for our shortcomings therein, one of grace and unspeakable mercy ; gracious engagements, Covenants which the Eternal God has vouchsafed to make with His feeble creature, man. Two, by Christ's death made one ; these were for Oliver the Divine solution of this, our mystery of life. They were two, he was heard to say ; two, but put into one before the foundation of the world. And again, It is holy and true, it is holy and true, it is holy and true. Who made it holy and true ? The Mediator of the Covenant. And again : The Covenant is but one. Faith in the Covenant is my only support ; and if I believe not, He abideth faithful. When his wife and children stood weeping round him he said, Love not the world ; I say to you, it is not good that ye should love the world. Children, live like Christians. I leave you the Covenant."<sup>1</sup> A great legacy for children, and children's children, of which happily, to this day they have not utterly grown weary. It were hard to tell what we owe to Puritan England thus, for one brief hour, smitten into grim earnest, and confronting the great problem of life. It would be hard to tell

<sup>1</sup> *Cromwell's Letters and Speeches*, Vol. III.

what we owe her in the way of political and social ideals. When a man once realizes himself thus related, in covenant with the Eternal, be he the humblest of us all, drummer or drummer-boy he stands equal in faith and hope to the Lord Protector himself, and to much higher potencies than he, and is henceforth, with or without a vote, no negligible quantity.

It is of course easy to point out the limits, nay, if you will, the glaring defects, of the Puritan theology; how, in its desire to magnify the grace of God as it comes along the Covenant channel, it has done scant justice, say rather gross injustice, to all that lies outside; e.g. to natural instinct, to the ordinary course of Providence, and even to those merciful strivings of the Divine spirit never wholly absent from the heart of man. All these it persuades itself to pass by as common and unclean.<sup>1</sup> And yet how attractive and inherently noble is this Covenant Theology which, indeed, has a way of reappearing and reasserting itself on every occasion when the soul of man is deeply stirred, whenever Religion becomes once more the great concern of life. The tendency of Religious Thought is to lose itself among the Immensities—Eternal Decrees, and such imposing, but wholly impalpable, abstractions. The Covenant Theology tempts it down to earth and gives it an historic basis. Nay, it has been pointed out, that, in its own way, the Covenant Theology anticipated the scientific achievements of the nineteenth century, and taught men, for the first time, to regard Life from the germinal or evolutionary point of view, as part of an Eternal Process. But most of all it affects our spiritual experience. Religion is no longer a mere ideal.

<sup>1</sup> See an interesting account of its developments in the Cunningham Lectures by Dr. James Walker (*Scottish Theology and Theologians*).

a snowy summit toward which we vainly pant, while it remains silent to our appeals, inaccessible to our most strenuous efforts. Instinct with life and sympathy, the Divine stoops to us, comes into definite and personal relation with us, assumes entire responsibility for us, bidding us rely, without doubt or fear, upon the grace of God. Quite indescribable is the change thus wrought. At once, aspiration becomes attainment ; Religion, experience ; while the soul, delivered from the distraction of conflicting duties, passes into the simplicity and freedom of a child-like fellowship with God. The highest motives for holiness are adduced, while the most gracious provision is made for possible failure. The Past becomes prophetic, a pledge of the infinite blessedness which awaits us in God.

## THE REDEMPTION OF THE LAND

THE Redemption of the Land follows naturally on the Renewal of the Covenant ; and forms the third motif in the Hymn of Praise. The connexion between chap. xxxi, 27-36 and chap. xxxii is profound, and touches the very heart of religion as conceived by the Old Testament saint.

We must give up the idea of Hebrew Faith as being, in any sense, a Metaphysical Monotheism. There were gods many and lords many, each having a local habitation and a sphere of influence. Jahveh was Israel's God, and Salem was His dwelling place. And, just as the peasants of medieval Europe gathered round the person of their feudal lord, as they built their huts and tilled their fields and organized the first rude beginnings of municipal life under the walls of his castle, to which they appealed for justice in case of a quarrel, and for protection in case of attack ; and just as, in return for the protection thus secured, they gave service in time of war and did homage in time of peace ; so it was with Israel and Jahveh. Redeemed from Egypt, they entered Canaan and held the land as His vassals on condition of homage and service. The land was a sacrament of the relation in which they stood to Him, and therefore, as we have seen, it was holy. To live there, was to enjoy His protecting care ; to be driven from it was to be forced to worship other gods on whom they had no hereditary

claim.<sup>1</sup> The loss of the land meant exclusion from the Covenant ; the Renewal of the Covenant involved the Redemption of the land. Grasping this connexion, we are now in a position to consider the incident brought before us in chap. xxxii.

The prophet is now in prison. In chap. xxxvii we learn the circumstances under which he came there.<sup>2</sup> During a momentary cessation of the siege, he had proposed to leave the city so as to take possession of some land at Anathoth. As he passed the gates, he was apprehended by the guard, charged with treason as a deserter, and thrown into a dungeon, from which, by the intervention of the king, he was removed to the comparative comfort and freedom of the guard-house. It was under these circumstances that Hanameel, his cousin, found him out. The prophet's knowledge of human nature enabled him at once to divine the purpose of the visit ; while the peculiar circumstances gave it a religious significance in his eyes. “ The word of Jahveh came to me, saying, Behold Hanameel, the son of Shallum, thy uncle, is coming to thee, saying, Buy thee my field that is in Anathoth, for the right of redemption is thine to buy it.” It is not difficult to surmise the motive that brought Hanameel to the guardhouse. The men of Anathoth, and particularly

<sup>1</sup> See 1 Sam. xxvi, 19.

<sup>2</sup> The narrative of xxxii is based, no doubt, on the *Memorabilia* of Baruch. But the first five verses are Editorial. Note the double dating in verse 1 (cf. xxv, 1). The Editor combines notices drawn from various sources (xxxvii, 21 ; xxxviii, 13 and 28), so as to create the necessary background for the story that follows. He produces, I imagine, the impression on his readers that the king, piqued by personal references to himself in the prophet's preaching, meant to silence him by putting him in ward. How far this impression is from representing the actual facts, we shall see.

the prophet's own family, were bitterly opposed to him. They had hunted him, with hue and cry, out of the town, and since then appear to have disowned him. But no man will find himself friendless for long, if he is in a position to do his neighbours a good turn. At that time the land about Jerusalem must have been practically worthless. It was at the peril of his life a man went into the fields to till them, and the harvests that might ripen there were sure to be reaped by the Chaldean soldiery, wandering round. On the other hand, money was of great value. Prices were high, and the means of living difficult to secure. Hanameel seems to have conceived the idea of playing on the simplicity of his cousin, by offering him the purchase of some family lands. If he declined, his predictions of the future, and, indeed, his prophetic character, would be discredited; if he accepted, Hanameel would make a good bargain, and enjoy a hearty laugh at his cousin's expense. So men act who, in the imagined superiority of their worldly wisdom, are mere fools compared to the babes whom God makes wise. The offer was accepted, and the transfer of the lands carried through.

An interesting side glance into legal procedure among the Jews is given us here. A deed of purchase was drawn out, sealed and signed by witnesses, and then, for safety, buried in an earthen vessel. According to the Hebrew text this deed of purchase was double, sealed and open; but the text is involved and, at points, ungrammatical. Hitzig suggests that the double deed may have been a single parchment folded over, sealed at the upper end while the lower end was left open. But this is hardly in agreement with the text. In their version of verses 6-13, the LXX know of only one deed, which is sealed in

proper legal fashion ; but, in verse 14, they allude to an open letter or document accompanying it, evidently meant to be retained in hand by the purchaser for easy reference, although in this particular case, and for very obvious reasons, it was buried with the legal deed. Such a hint was probably enough for some later Editor who, working back over the narrative, introduces the open letter at every point, amends the context to suit, and produces the present chaos in the Hebrew text. For the reader's convenience, the Hebrew and Greek versions may be reproduced side by side.

## M.T.

Verse 9. And I bought the field of Hanameel, my uncle's son, and weighed him the money, even seventeen shekels of silver.

Verse 10. And I put it in writing and sealed it, and took witnesses and weighed him the money in the balances.

Verse 11. Then I took the deed of purchase, *both that which was sealed, the covenant and the conditions, and that which was open.*

Verse 12. And I gave the deed of purchase unto Baruch the son of Neraiah, the son of Maaseiah, in the sight of Hanameel my uncle, and in the sight of witnesses that subscribed the deed of purchase and in the sight of all the Jews that sat in the guard room.

## LXX.

Verse 9. And I bought the field of Hanamel, my uncle's son, and weighed him the money, even seventeen shekels of silver.

Verse 10. And I put it in writing and sealed it, and took witnesses and weighed the money in the balances.

Verse 11. Then I took the deed of purchase which was sealed.

Verse 12. And gave it to Baruch, the son of Nereiah, the son of Maasiah, in the sight of Hanamel, mine uncle's son, and in the sight of the men that stood by and had signed the deed of purchase, and in the sight of the Jews that were in the guard room.

Verse 13. And I charged Baruch in their sight, saying :

Verse 14. Thus saith Jahveh of Hosts, saying, Take these deeds, this deed of purchase which is sealed and this open deed, and put them in an earthen vessel that they may continue many days.

Verse 13. And I charged Baruch in their sight, saying :

Verse 14. Thus saith Jahveh of Hosts, God of Israel, saying, Take this deed of purchase with the open letter and put it in an earthen vessel that it may continue many days.

So Hanameel went his way, and Jeremiah was left with his bad bargain. He follows the habit of his life and refers the whole matter to Jahveh, under whose directions he was acting. The prayer recorded in verses 16-25 cannot be regarded as a literal reproduction of the prophet's words. There is indeed at certain points an abruptness of thought, a force and directness of utterance, which are unmistakably original. But elsewhere the language is conventional and diffuse. In its present form the passage is the result of reflection. It gives a sympathetic and suggestive, if not convincing, analysis of the prophet's experience at this critical hour. He appeals to Jahveh, first of all, as the maker of Heaven and earth, and therefore as creating the conditions under which he works; to whose power, therefore, there can be no limits. He appeals to Him, next, as the God of Providence maintaining a certain continuity in the moral government of the world ("repaying the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them") and yet, according to the regulative principle of the New Covenant, not bound by any precedent or entangled amid the complexities of social life, but "giving to every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." He appeals to Him, still further, as the God of Redemption working great wonders in the land of Egypt and

bringing forth His people ; a God whose grace to Israel is the more God-like because they have made so poor a return. "They have not hearkened to Him nor walked in His ways." Such is the background of the picture conjured up. With a few swift strokes, in which one seems to recognize the prophet's own hand, the foreground is added ; the beleaguered city, famine and pestilence wasting its streets, while the Chaldeans heap up their mounds of earth against the wall and prepare to take it. One word more, and he leaves the matter in Jahveh's hands : "Thou hast said, buy the land for silver, and take witnesses." It is true that no such command has been recorded. But God speaks to man not only in articulate utterance but through Providence and by His Spirit. Hanameel's visit was of the Lord. Behind the proposal of his sly and self-seeking cousin Jeremiah could see Jahveh's hand at work. The opportunity for self-sacrifice and Christian service, the chance to do a good deed, is itself a call from God ; a challenge and a command to do it.

William Law, that diligent student not only of human nature but of the art of Prayer, writes thus : "When you begin your petitions, use such various expressions of the attributes of God as may make you most sensible of the greatness and power of the Divine nature. For the representation of the Divine attributes which show us, in some measure, the majesty and the greatness of God, is an excellent means of raising our hearts into lively acts of worship and adoration." And again he puts these words into the mouth of Paternus, instructing his little son. "Conceive the magnificence of God, magnify His Providence, adore His power." No doubt that was the attitude which our prophet sought to maintain.

Instead of being overwhelmed by actual facts, he struggles to realize the ideal Order of the Universe, to reach that point of vantage held by Faith from which he may command the present hour. Jeremiah's prayer as recorded here is like those petitions which are sent up to the House of Commons by perplexed and suffering members of the Commonwealth. It is all preamble, "Whereas." What should follow, what steps are best to be taken, he leaves to Higher Powers to decide. It is thus the saints have ever loved to pray. As children of the Heavenly Father, we are permitted, on occasion, to urge some particular request with child-like pertinacity. But in more heroic moods, Faith transcends the personal. Prayer, in its essence, is not petition but adoration.

Another long passage follows (verses 26-41), which is Editorial throughout. If Milton makes the Almighty reason like a schoolman, our Editor makes him preach like a Deuteronomist. Verse after verse, put into Jahveh's mouth, recalls passages already familiar to us. The outlook into the future with which the people are credited (verse 36) is contradicted by the blind optimism to which they themselves give utterance elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> The city has already fallen; and the people are scattered among the nations. But Jahveh is at work. He will restore them to their land; give them one heart to serve Him; and rejoice over them to do them good. The New Covenant becomes an Everlasting Covenant (verse 40). What Jahveh had sent the prophet to do, He does now with His own hand, planting them in the land. The whole passage is suffused with the cheerful glow of an easy, comfortable Eudaemonism which is the reflection of a quite other,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. verses 3 and 4.

and much later, age than the prophet's own. Only toward the close (verses 42-44) are we brought back to the actual situation as Jeremiah had to face it. One thing the author will impress on all his readers: We never lose by trusting God. Point by point, perplexity and doubt, as stated by the prophet (verse 25), are taken up and removed: Men shall buy and sign, and seal and take witnesses, not only in Jerusalem but in the regions around, "for I will bring again their captivity, saith Jahveh."

The transaction narrated in this chapter is certainly not to be judged on what men call business principles. The prophet made no mistake as to what he was doing. He knew that the land would fetch no price in the market just then. No speculative builder in Jerusalem would have looked at Hanameel's offer. Nor was his action purely patriotic. Patriotism is a natural virtue which has had a powerful influence on history; and nowhere has it inspired such a passion of intense devotion as on the little plot of land set between the mountains and the sea, and blossoming into beauty over against the Syrian Desert. Still a natural virtue cannot transcend the laws and limits prescribed by Reason. It was the religious interest that was supreme in the prophet's mind. The piece of ground was small; but it stood for all that was most sacred in his own spiritual experience. Had he withdrawn from Hanameel's offer, he would have confessed himself to be as unbelieving as the great majority around him. In buying the field at Anathoth, he was redeeming his own faith in the Future and in God. In this light the transaction is most instructive. We are all too ready to yield to what we call the spirit of the age, or to the trend of modern thought, or to the pressure of actual circumstance. Little by little

Faith is elbowed out, till we think and speak and act as if there were no God. In spite of ourselves, we become Atheists. For we are bound to lose a Faith that we never put in use ; and, if we will not risk a £5 note for God, it is in vain we speak of resting on Him our hope of everlasting salvation.

At this point commentators are observed to consult their Livy, marking the page which tells how, when Rome was invested by Hannibal, the ground on which the Carthaginian camp stood was sold at its full price in the Roman Forum. The parallel is striking. Yet at that time, Rome was sound to the core and believed in her own future ; in Jeremiah's day, Jerusalem was rotten, and believed in nothing. Fortunately we do not need to travel so far back, for interesting and instructive parallels.

What would the reader have given for an estate in Hunnan, N.W. China, in the year when Pekin was in the hands of the Boxers, and the mob moving round with clubs and axes to root out and exterminate the Foreign Devilry ? Yet there were men and women who, having given up all for China, sealed the deed of purchase with their blood. To-day their souls rest in peace, till the redemption of the purchased possession.

Fifty years ago Africa was still the Dark Continent, from shore to shore a dense forest, tenanted by big game and savage tribes, given over to sportsmen and the slave-driver pursuing his nefarious trade in human flesh. But God raised up a man, a factory hand from the Lowlands of Scotland, who took the vast continent to his heart and, first by a long life of self-denial, and then by his lonely death on the Lake-side, redeemed Africa for civilization and Christ. To-day, roads are built and rails laid into the heart of the continent. Steamers ply on her great inland

seas, and the Union Jack is floating over trading stations and Mission compounds. By the end of the century, Africa will be the most profitable investment offered to European capital. But Faith led the way.

Henry Martyn, senior wrangler for his year, sailed to India as a missionary for the Cross, throwing his life away, as his friends told him. In five years, to use his own expression, he had "burned out for Christ." Writing from Dinapore he says: "Respecting my heart about which you ask, I must acknowledge that Henry Martyn's heart in Dinapore is the same as Henry Martyn's heart in Cambridge. The tenor of my prayer is nearly the same, except on one subject, the conversion of the heathen. At a distance from the scene of action, and trusting too much to the highly coloured descriptions of missionaries, my heart used to expand with rapture at the hope of seeing thousands of natives melting under the word as soon as it was preached to them. But I am called to exercise faith, that so it shall be one day. My former feelings on this point were more agreeable and, at the same time, more in accordance with the truth. For, if we believe the prophets, the scenes that Time shall unfold, though surpassing fable, are yet true. Even as I write, hope and joy spring up in my heart. Yes, it shall be. Yonder stream of Ganges shall one day roll through tracts adorned with Christian churches and cultivated by Christian husbandmen, and the holy hymn be heard beneath the shade of the tamarind. All things are working together to bring in that day, and my part in this blessed plan, though not at first exactly according to my wishes, is, I believe, appointed me by God." "Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance"; so runs the New

Covenant. But the Church must sign the deed with tears and blood, before she enters on possession.

There is another application of this incident which brings it still nearer home to our hearts. The reader himself may have had occasion to make his first purchase of land, under circumstances not wholly dissimilar from the prophet's. We have stood by many as they signed the deed, and laid some dear one in his quiet resting-place. We have hallowed the spot with our prayers and tears. Why all this reverence for the dead? Why these plots railed off, and kept with such care, like the fields at Anathoth—God's Acre at our city gates? It is because in a world where Death reigns, we believe in Life, and look to see its conquest. It is because Christ lives, and we believe in Him. "O grave, where is thy victory, O Death, where is thy sting?"

## THE REORGANIZATION OF THE NATIONAL LIFE

### CHAPTER XXXIII

**F**Ollowing on the Re-union of the Tribes, the Renewal of the Covenant, and the Restoration of the land, comes the Reorganization of the national life. The treatment is looser than elsewhere in the great section ;<sup>1</sup> and the prophetic element is reduced almost to zero.

Verses 4-9 are probably based on the Memorabilia of Baruch, and are thus at least indirectly prophetic. The earlier verses (1-3) are Editorial. They give us the interpretation put on the prophet's experience by a later age. The rest of the chapter (10-32) is also Editorial, recording, in a fragmentary way, the ideals of a later and post-Exilic age.

Verses 1-3. The language used, the unmistakable influence of the second Isaiah,<sup>2</sup> compel us to attribute these verses not to Jeremiah but to a sympathetic disciple and exponent of his system. "And the word of Jahveh came a second time to Jeremiah, while he was still shut up in the court of the guard room, saying : Thus saith Jahveh, who doeth it, Jahveh who fashions it, to establish it, Jahveh is His name, Call on Me and I will answer thee and show thee great and inaccessible things which thou knowest not."

<sup>1</sup> Except perhaps in the Prelude, chap. xxx.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Isa. xliv, 2, xlv, 7, xlvi, 1, xlvi. 7, xlvi. 2, 24; xlvi. 7, 18.

Objection has been taken to these verses on two grounds. First, because they convey a summons to prayer, which is apparently disregarded in the sequel ; and, next, because they convey a promise of something novel and startling in the way of Revelation to which there is nothing that corresponds in the rest of the chapter. But prayer is not necessarily audible or articulate ; and the summons to prayer may be regarded as sufficiently honoured by the spirit of dependence and expectation which is implied in all that follows. It is more difficult to deal with the second objection. It is true that we find in what follows that which seems to us a somewhat tame reiteration of promises already made, a ringing of the changes on a few already familiar notes ; yet it may be urged that truths in themselves old enough, trite and commonplace if you will, may, under certain circumstances, be invested with all the charm and splendour of a fresh revelation. When the exiles returned to Palestine, though all that happened had been foretold by prophecy, they were “like men that dreamed.” Conversion is a commonplace of Christian Theology, and yet, when we see a soul emerge from darkness and pass into the freedom and joy of the Gospel, we think of it, and speak of it, as a miracle of grace. Such may well have been the experience of the prophet. Shut up in prison amidst depressing surroundings, seeing things go from bad to worse within the city, and the circle of the humanly possible narrow about himself and his people, he may easily, like the Baptist under similar circumstances, have felt his faith fail. And then, shooting down from the open Heaven, piercing its way through darkness to the soul, the Word of Jahveh came to him a second time a gracious Presence, like the angel that stood by Peter in the prison ; a beautiful vision,

like the Holy Grail, "rose-red with beatings in it, as alive," that invaded the gloom of the convent cell. Nor is the message thus conveyed by any means so turgid and bombastic as commentators would make it. The phrase: "I will show thee great and inaccessible things which thou knowest not," calls for special notice.

It is familiar to the students of the earlier Scriptures, especially in the Book of Deuteronomy, where it is used of the cities built by the Canaanites for their defence. When the spies returned to Moses, they reported favourably of the land. It was a good land, flowing with milk and honey. But, they said, it is in vain that we go up; the inhabitants of the land are great, they are sons of Anak, and their cities walled to Heaven, "great and inaccessible." It required the faith of Caleb to silence the people: If the Lord delight in us, He will give us the land. Now, there is something subtle and suggestive in the reappearance of that phrase just here, in connexion with what we may describe as a second conquest of the land. Notice how, in xxxii, 22, the prophet plays the part of spy, surveying the land, not as it was, wasted by drought and sword, but as it had been and should again be: "A good land flowing with milk and honey." Notice further how, xxxii, 41, Jahveh responds to the faith of His servant, evidently with reference to the words of Caleb, saying: "I will rejoice over them to do them good, and will plant them in the land." Yet the difficulties in the way were very great. The land was in possession of an enemy, in comparison with whom the Canaanites themselves were as grasshoppers. The camp of the Chaldeans lay close up to the gates of the city. As he looked round, the prophet's heart failed him. Once again the fate of the true Israel trembled in the balance. At this

point Jahveh interposes and appeals to the past. Those fortified cities, whose gates had opened, whose walls had crumbled, before the advance of Faith, shall find their counterpart in the great and inaccessible things He will yet show,<sup>1</sup> i.e. summon as His witnesses, before His servants' eye. Let me repeat. On critical grounds, the passage must be judged to be non-Jeremian; but the spiritual instincts of the reader will always linger here, finding profound insight in this record of a second conversion as experienced by the lonely prophet in his cell.

verses 4-9. The style, especially at first (4-6), is involved and broken, and quite unlike the easy flow of later Editors. There is no reason to doubt that we are here in touch with original documents. We see the city, as the prophet saw it through the narrow grating of his prison, in the agony of a last despairing struggle. We see the garrison emaciated by famine and sickness hard at work, tearing down the houses, both high and low, and, with the débris, building up some sort of rude defence against the enemy. In spite of all their efforts they lose ground daily. The spaces cleared for defence are rapidly filled up with the wounded and dying. Then, on the theatre thus defined, a new, vitalizing and reconstructive force begins to work. The breaches in the wall are healed; a tide of physical and moral health rolls<sup>2</sup> down the choked and

<sup>1</sup> The phrase seems technical and legal; cf. chap. xx, 10, and Job xvii, 5.

<sup>2</sup> Instead of: "I will reveal to thee the abundance," read as above (תְּהִלָּה). Compare Amos v, 24 and Isa. xlviii, 18. The word translated "abundance" (A.V.) does not elsewhere occur. The root is found in Prov. xxvii, 6 (to be rendered. Plentiful or Profuse, instead of Deceitful; see Toy on Proverbs)—connected by Ewald with an Arabic root 'Athara=anstossen

fetid streets. From their distant homes the exiles return, Jahveh's redeemed, till the city becomes once more a praise in the earth. Toward the end of the passage we detect the Editor's hand at work again, grouping and linking, somewhat loosely, those comfortable words that, from time to time, had fallen from the Master's lips.

Veres 10-13. Here evidently we have left the prophet far behind. The verses were written, one feels sure, by an eye-witness of what he describes. The Temple and the city are in ruins ; the tide of life has ebbed away from the once crowded streets, which are left without man and without beast. Once and again, the mournful refrain, the note of penetrating pathos, strikes on our ears. The very monotony is suggestive, like the wail of the wind about a ruined tenement, or the cry of a wild bird on some lonely moor. Then again, in delightful contrast, the ear of faith is quickened to hear the hum of the distant fold, and all the stir of happy human life in days to come ; while the stately and solemn anthem swells within the Temple courts, where men gather once more to worship Jahveh and lay their gifts upon His altar. "Praise Jahveh, for Jahveh is good ; for His mercy endureth for ever." The introduction of what is evidently a liturgical element, based on some of the later psalms, is in favour of the post-Exilic origin of the passage. It shows us how the ritual gradually superseded the ethical in religion, till the Temple and its worship took the place of great social questions in the hearts of this Jewish people.

From the capital, the tide of prosperity sweeps out over the whole land. The Hill Country with its peasant folk, formerly despised by the city ; the or fällen. Here, in the same way, the idea is probably that of an impetuous torrent.

Shephelah, or Lowlands, "flung off from the central ridge of Judah,"<sup>1</sup> with its independent and practically alien race; the Negeb, or South, verging on the Desert, with parched and barren soil; each in its turn shares in a blessing which is meant for all. If, for the later Jew, Palestine meant Jerusalem, and nothing more, it was not so in the happy, hearty days which followed on the Restoration. The evangelistic and missionary note is unmistakable there.

Veres 14-26. The entire passage is absent from the LXX, and is probably of late origin.

Veres 14-16. An old oracle is confirmed with new sanctions. What had been predicted of the Messianic King<sup>2</sup> is here predicted of the Messianic people: "This is the name whereby she shall be called, Jehovah, our Righteousness." It is true that the alteration is slight, and that a preference might fairly be claimed, even here, for the earlier pointing, in view of verse 17 which refers not to the city or the nation, but to the king. Yet the alteration, slight as it is, is suggestive. There is perhaps no Christian doctrine to which more persistent and strenuous objections have been taken than to the Doctrine of Imputed Righteousness. Yet it is deeply rooted, not only in Holy Scripture, but in the history of the Covenant people. Nor is our own experience wanting by way of confirmation. Our best friends are seldom those we make for ourselves; rather they transfer to us the regard they cherished for those who went before us. When an Englishman travels abroad, a certain distinction, to which he has no personal claim, invests him as a member of an empire that rules the sea. A solemn interest attaches to human life, due, not so much to what it is, as to the possibilities it contains. Rightly

<sup>1</sup> G. A. Smith.

<sup>2</sup> See chap. xxiii, 6.

we judge the humblest by the highest of its kind ; and thus life is ennobled by association. But the highest application of this principle is reached when a believing man finds himself one with God by his union with the god-man ; when, at a single step, he passes from the past and all the limits of the human, into the region of Divine Certainty and Completeness, and realizes himself as the Righteousness of God in Christ. On this relation of the individual to the universal, of the believer through Christ to God as the Eternal Father, depends, as we have already seen, the stability of the New Covenant.

Verses 17-22. The new order is stamped with perpetuity. In verses 17, 18 the writer affects an archaic style, identifying the priests and Levites after the manner of the Deuteronomist. The indefinite multiplication of priestly and royal personages, which marks the future, might be regarded as a doubtful boon. We may however pardon the exuberant loyalty and enthusiasm which were due, perhaps, to the absence of the coveted blessings !

Verses 23-26. The closing verses are of doubtful interpretation. "These two families whom the Lord hath chosen" are clearly Israel and Judah ; but who are "this people who despise them ?" The alternative lies between the heathen in Babylon and the unbelieving Jews in Judah. Against the former view is the phrase, This people (Ha'am Haz-zeh), which is not elsewhere used of the Gentiles. Against the latter is the difficulty of seeing how one section of the people could disinherit another "from being a nation before them." If we slightly alter the text and read : From being a nation before Me, the meaning is plain. Jahveh affirms that the unbelieving Jews who deny the Covenant, and, with it, all that is distinctive in their

national life, have, in effect, disinherited themselves and their brethren from being a nation before Him. In spite of this, the Covenant stands ; the great covenant of Nature, day and night, and sun and stars, and the greater Covenant of His Grace, who will not reject His people, but will " restore their captivity and have mercy upon them."

It should be noticed how this great Hymn of Praise, as it dies away, returns to its key-note (xxx, 3, xxxi, 2-6), the Reunion of the scattered tribes : " These two families whom Jahveh hath chosen."

#### CRITICAL NOTES

Verse 3. "Great and Inaccessible things." Ewald suggests that B'çûrôth should be altered to N'çûrôth, in keeping with Isa. xlviii, 6. But the inverse process would be quite as easy.

Verses 4-5. Verse 4, the text is difficult. If we adopt Duhm's suggestion, based on the LXX, it may be read thus : (verse 4) : Concerning the houses . . . which are broken down to form mounds and a rampart ; (verse 5) while they go to fight with the Chaldeans.

## SIDE-LIGHTS

### CHAPTER XXXV

CHAP. XXXIV narrates an incident belonging to the reign of Zedekiah ; chap. xxxv, an incident in the reign of Jehoiakim. An interval of ten years separates the two events thus recorded. The chapters are brought together because of a common idea, and inserted here as illustrations, by way of contrast and analogy, of the Doctrine of the Covenant just expounded, side-lights from contemporary history, the Covenant broken and kept. Reserving chap. xxxiv for consideration in connexion with the siege of the city, we come to chap. xxxv. (For the date of the incident narrated here, cf. verse 11 with 2 Kings xxix, 2). The narrative may have been drawn from Baruch's *Memorabilia*. Possibly we owe it rather to tradition ; but against that idea is the pedigree furnished in verse 3. In *v. 1* Jeremiah is spoken of in the third person ; in *vv. 2-5* he speaks in the first person. Thereafter the text reverts to the original form, and the third person is used. No doubt in verses 2-5 we may see the hand of an Editor who endeavours to import life into Baruch's narrative, where, so far as we can judge, the third person was the rule.

The Rechabites, of whom the chapter speaks, were Kenites, and therefore a branch of the Midianites. It was probably through the influence of Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, himself a Kenite, that the tribe was brought into friendly relations with Israel.

Some of them, like these sons of Jonadab, had adopted the religion of Israel.<sup>1</sup> and could enter as proselytes into the Temple courts. Originally a nomad tribe, there was not much cohesion among them. Kenites were found in the North of Palestine in the period of the Judges. At the tent door of Jael, the Kenite, Sisera halted after his defeat. Others had settled near Jericho.<sup>2</sup> But their natural home was in the South of Judah, on the verge of the Desert. The origin of the peculiar customs with which they are credited here lay far back in their wandering life. To such a people, there is always a temptation, after a successful foray, to settle down on the conquered lands and, while acquiring the arts of peace, and practising the virtues of civilization, to lose the simplicity and strength of the Desert. It was no doubt on this account that they bound themselves never "to build houses, or sow seed, or plant vineyards," but to dwell in tents. Under pressure of circumstances, e.g. while the surrounding country was overrun by Chaldean soldiery, they might retire into the city, but it was still to pitch their tents on the waste land lying within the walls. Such customs are not to be regarded as positive laws, entered on a statute book. If they are associated here with the name of Jonathan, it is only as all legislation in the East is associated with the name of some honoured Urvater of the tribe. Rather, they represent the traditions of a desert folk, impatient of restraint, and scornful of a life more stationary, and therefore

<sup>1</sup> The names given in verse 3 indicate so much. Jahveh enters into composition with the first and second—presumptive proof of adhesion to the Jewish faith. The same might be said of the third name—Habazziniah. But in the LXX. it is abbreviated to Habazzin.

<sup>2</sup> See Judges i, 16.

more dependent on its surroundings, than their own.

For these sons of Jonadab the prophet had a not unnatural admiration. He invites some of their representatives<sup>1</sup> to a feast in one of the chambers, or halls, within the Temple courts<sup>2</sup> and places before them beakers of wine such as a seasoned toper might assay. They had no need to excuse themselves to the prophet, when they refused to drink. Would to God that all were as faithful to their vows, as loyal to the traditions of their past, as were these stalwart sons of the Desert ; so thinks the prophet. " Thus saith Jahveh of Hosts, God of Israel, go and say to the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Will ye not receive instruction and hearken to my words ? saith Jahveh. The words of Jonadab, the son of Rechab, which he commanded his sons not to drink wine are established ; and to this day they drink none, for they obey their father's instruction. But I have spoken unto you, rising up early and speaking, and ye have not hearkened unto me." The contrast is striking. Jonadab, the son of Rechab, had been dead for more than two centuries. He was a mere name to these men ; he had done nothing for them ; he had no power to enforce his commands. What he required of them was, if wise and wholesome, still, under existing circumstances, an irksome restraint.

<sup>1</sup> In verse 3, instead of : And all his sons, read (with the LXX) : and his sons.

<sup>2</sup> For the use of these Chambers (Lishākōth) compare 1 Sam. ix, 22 ; also Ezek. xl, 17-45. In Jer. xxxvi, 10 we read of such a Chamber used by Gemariah opening into the Temple Court, from which Baruch could read to the people. On the other hand, some were more private—reserved for State officials (xxxvi, 20). The " Sons of Hanan " are probably members of a Guild, of which Hanan was head.

Yet they had established his words. Jahveh was the living God, enforcing His laws by constant appeals and solemn sanctions ; only good had ever come from Him ; yet they had not inclined their ear, nor hearkened to Him.

In verses 18, 19 follows a promise to the Rechabites : "Thus saith Jahveh of Hosts, the God of Israel, Because you have hearkened to the command of Jonadab, your father, and kept all his commandments, and done according to all he commanded you ; therefore thus sayeth Jahveh of Hosts, the God of Israel, Jonadab, the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before Me for ever." Commentators, with infinite pains, have unearthed a passage from Eusebius, a Christian writer of the third century, in which he speaks of a Rechabite Priesthood as existing in his day ; another instance, according to some, of the literal fulfilment of prophecy. But in truth, unless we can prove that the Rechabites remained faithful to their vows, we have no right to speak of the fulfilment, literal or otherwise, of a promise which, like all the promises of God, was conditional. What we find here is a general principle : Given loyalty to a cause and readiness to suffer for it, you must reckon with that cause, as a factor in history. The element of permanence is in it. On the other hand, the best cause may be betrayed by faithless or half-hearted supporters ; in such hands, even the cause of God must fail.

An excellent analogy to this instance of Desert Loyalty is furnished by Dean Stanley in his *Sinai and Palestine*. "To-day occurred a curious instance of the tenacity with which the Bedouins maintain their traditions. We passed a cairn said to be the grave of the horse of Abu Zinneb, his horse killed in battle. Who Abu Zinneb was, where he lived, and

what the battle was, is not known, but he left an ordinance that every Arab should throw sand on the cairn, as if it were barley, and say, Eat, eat, O horse of Abu Zinneb, as if the dead creature were still alive. So said the Bedouin ; and accordingly, every man uttered the words, and pushed the sand twice or thrice with his foot as he passed. I could not help thinking of the Rechabites as described by Jeremiah."

## THE BURNING OF THE ROLL

### CHAPTER XXXVI

**I**N chap. xxv, we read that the word of Jahveh came to Jeremiah in the fourth year of Jehoiakim. The great battle of Carchemish had been fought; Egyptian hopes of extended empire had received a fatal blow; a new and striking figure had emerged on the stage of history. In this year the prophet received directions to commit to writing the substance of his previous teaching, and thus to make a fresh appeal to the conscience of his people.<sup>1</sup> The fact that his ministerial activity was, even partially and for a time, curtailed<sup>2</sup> may have inclined him to a

<sup>1</sup> Erbt strikes out verse 3, principally on the ground that the substance of it occurs in xxvi, 3. But it is only the substance; and it is natural that the hope, however faint, of winning back his people, should find expression at every great crisis in the prophet's life. In verse 2, instead of: "Concerning Israel and concerning Judah," read (with the LXX): Concerning Jerusalem and concerning Judah. Duhm, of course, omits: "And concerning the nations."

<sup>2</sup> "I am shut up" (*Açûr*), I cannot go into Jahve's house." The reason for this exclusion from the Temple is not given. It may have been the result of the émeute of which chap. xxvi gives an account. So Giesebricht. Duhm thinks such an idea "ganz Willkührlich," and thinks rather of some temporary ceremonial defilement. With this, one may compare the phrase 'açûr ve'azûb (i.e. Taboo and Free) as probably indicating the two classes into which, from an ecclesiastical point of view, the community was divided (W.R.S.) (*Religion of Semites*,

course by which he might not only maintain, but extend his influence over the counsels of the nation. The result of this important departure is narrated in chap. xxxvi. There are indications at various points of an eye-witness (see verses 16 and 22) ; and we cannot doubt that we owe this important chapter to Baruch's hand. For its bearing on the wider question of the composition of the Book, the reader is referred back to the General Introduction. The chapter is highly interesting. Into very brief space is crowded quite a large number of figures full of life and of conflicting passions.

Verses 1-8. First of all, we see the prophet in his own home. Baruch, the faithful friend and fellow labourer, is at his side, pen in hand, ready to write. On the table is spread a roll of parchment. The prophet paces up and down the room, while he dictates ; now pouring out a torrent of lava-like denunciation, now softening into tender and passionate appeal ; sometimes breaking off into silence, as one who waits that Another may speak. One thinks of St. Paul in his hired house at Rome, with Mark or Luke by his side, his hand fettered, but his spirit free, as he dictates one of those epistles which are to this hour the precious heritage of the Church.<sup>1</sup> The first copy of the Prophet's Roll contained, as we have seen, chaps. i-vi, with passages from chap. xxv as postscript. The task of dictation, therefore, was not heavy. Moreover, it was a task of absorbing interest ; of interest that grew, as they recalled the

p. 456). Evidently, as we gather from chap. xxv, the prophet's activity was only circumscribed. Shut out from the Temple, he had still the ear of the people.

<sup>1</sup> Erbt, in this connexion, finely speaks of our prophet as *Der Erste Paulus.*

events of many stirring years, inserting here and there a word of explanation, or comment, or remonstrance, directed, as it might happen to the people for whom, or to Jahveh in whose name, he wrote.<sup>1</sup>

Verses 9, 10. From the prophet's rooms we are transported to the Temple. Roll in hand Baruch takes his seat on a flight of steps, leading to the chamber of Gemariah, son of Shaphan, from which he could command the crowded court. Close to this spot some months before, the prophet had spoken out. On these very steps, was held the rough-and-ready tribunal before which he stood his trial ; and up these steps he had been borne by Ahikam into safety, out of the reach of an angry mob. A national fast had been proclaimed, that, if possible, the advance of the Chaldeans might be stayed.<sup>2</sup> Such acts of national humiliation have always been the favourite resort of an ungodly and superstitious age. From towns and villages the people gather in, once again in that mood of tremulous expectation which fitted them to receive his message. A written address never tells as the spoken word does ; and the impression made by Baruch's reading was by no means so lively as

<sup>1</sup> Compare chap. iv, 22 ; chap. v, 3, etc. In a curious note (p. 7) Erbt combats the possibility of any such modifications, as contrary to the prophetic conception of their own office. I cannot myself accept such a statement of the prophets' idea of their relation to Jahveh.

<sup>2</sup> The Roll was written toward the end of the fourth year of Jehoiakim. The Fast was held early in the following, fifth, year. The LXX read : The eighth year (mistaking י for ו). The ninth month fell in the winter (cf. verse 22) ; from which we gather that Jeremiah or Baruch (like Ezekiel) follows the Babylonian reckoning, according to which the year began in Spring, not in autumn, as in the old reckoning.

when the prophet himself stood before them, with flashing eye and outstretched arm. Besides, the people were subdued by the fear of impending catastrophe, and were not inclined to criticize or protest. In solemn silence they seem to have heard the Word of God. Gemariah himself was absent, on duty in the palace ; but his son Micaiah was there. Deeply impressed with the words he heard, and perhaps still more so by the sight of that great multitude of up-turned faces, the boy hurries through the Temple court to the Council Hall to tell his father. Again the scene changes as we follow him.

Verses 11-20. The Council of State was in session under the presidency of Elishama, successor of Shaphan. We recognize Gemariah, and Elnathan,<sup>1</sup> the rest are mere names, or shadows, to us. Eagerly the boy tells his tale, and pictures the scene he has just witnessed in the Court. They recognize the need for prompt action ; and despatch Jehudi, the usher or Black Rod of the Council, to fetch Baruch. Jehudi's great-great-grandfather was an Ethiopian proselyte ; he himself, the first of his family to be naturalized within the city, seems to have adopted the national, as his proper name, *the Jew*. There is a touch of official peremptoriness in the summons he conveys to Baruch : "That Roll which thou readest in the ears of the people, take it in thy hand, and come." Baruch's reception by the Council is more courteous ; he is invited to take his seat and read. With a select and critical audience before him, we may be sure he did his best ; and the impression produced was profound. We detect the hand of an eye-witness, Baruch's own, in the narrative at this point. "It came to pass when they heard all the words, they trembled

<sup>1</sup> See chap. xxvi, 22.

each to each" ; i.e., each man as he turned to look his neighbour in the face, saw his own fears reflected there ;<sup>1</sup> But no word is spoken till Baruch ends. Then they cross-question as to his authority : Tell us now, how didst thou write all these words ? Then Baruch said unto them : " He spake all these words to me with his mouth, and I wrote them with my hand."<sup>2</sup> A matter of such importance must evidently be reported to the king ; but the nobles take the wise precaution of laying up the Roll in the chamber of Elishamah, and advise Baruch to betake himself, with the prophet, to some place of secrecy.

Veres 21-26. The scene shifts again, as we cross the palace court, and enter the private apartments of the King.<sup>1</sup> It is midwinter, and a fire of coal burns beside him, in a brazier. After a brief consultation, Jehudi is despatched to fetch the Roll which, for a third time that day, is unrolled and read. Meantime, all eyes are bent on the King. He asks no questions, makes no comment, offers no remonstrance. In gloomy

<sup>1</sup> Compare Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Book ii, 420 :

But all sat mute,

Considering the danger with deep thoughts ; and each  
In other's countenance read his own dismay,  
Astonished.

<sup>2</sup> In the Hebrew : He spake all these words to me with his mouth, and I wrote them with ink. The LXX omit : With his mouth. Erbt follows them ; considering the omitted phrase to be a gloss. The LXX also omit : With ink. Duhm believes ink was used only in preparation of permanent records : so used here. But it is surely better, with a slight alteration of the text, to read as above. Thus (a) Baruch received the message direct from the prophet's own mouth ; and (b) with his own hand, he committed it to writing.

<sup>3</sup> M.T. reads : They went in to the King into the court, i.e. they passed through the court so as to reach the royal apartments. But read בְּבַדְּן (to his private room).

silence he listens ; then, suddenly bending forward he snatches the Roll from the reader's hands, cuts it in pieces with a knife, and flings it, page by page, upon the fire. Remonstrance is vain. Imperturbably resolute, he pursues his work of destruction till a heap of ashes smouldering on the hearth is all that is left of the prophet's Roll.

It was undoubtedly a crisis in Jehoiakim's life ; and a brief recapitulation of his eventful career may be ventured at this point, as the best possible setting to this dramatic scene. He was the son of Josiah, a good man and a good king, a king beloved by his people, and mourned by them with passionate sorrow when he fell. The traditions of Jehoiakim's home, the influences of his youth were, therefore, of the very best ; but neither heredity nor environment can eradicate individuality. On the death of Josiah, a younger son was preferred to the throne, a youth irresolute as he was unprincipled,<sup>1</sup> whose brief and tragic career stands in sharp contrast to that of his father. Few men, indeed, have been so carefully schooled by Providence as Jehoiakim was. Both sides of life were shown him, before he was called to live his own. He saw how much might come of unselfish devotion and high ideals, and what must come of indecision and folly. His own choice was soon made. Naturally hard and selfish, he was checked neither by the fear of God, nor by the love of man. His own ambition seems to have been to impress the popular imagination. This he proceeded to do, in an age of financial exhaustion, by indulging in wanton and childish excess. His mania for building has already been referred to.<sup>2</sup> The city was builded in blood and founded in iniquity till

<sup>1</sup> 2 Kings xxiii, 32.

<sup>2</sup> See chap. xxii.

"the stone from the wall cried out against him, and the rafter echoed its cry."<sup>1</sup>

Jehoiakim was not allowed to go on unwarned. With the freedom of a countryman, Urijah, of Kirjath-jearim, spoke out. Habakkuk, whose words we have just quoted, heaped woe upon woe on his guilty head. He silenced the one; the other he could afford to neglect. Jeremiah was not to be dealt with so lightly. His long career, his lofty character, his impressive personality forbade that. Moreover there was about him a note of insistence which even a king could not overcome. Nor was it only by the living voice, that Jahveh spoke. Heavy imposts levied by Egypt, the suzerain power, as well as repeated visitations of pestilence and drought, wasted the land. And now a new and more terrible calamity impended, the invasion of the Chaldean host. It is probable that Jehoiakim broke off all intercourse with Jeremiah early in his reign. It is significant that no mention is made of him in chap. xxv, a trumpet blast which must have wakened echoes, even within the palace. And now it was reported that the prophet's words were being read within the Temple court, in the hearing of all the people. Jehoiakim's attitude to the prophet's message was practically that of the African chief to Moffat, when he preached about the Resurrection: "I do not like this word about the dead rising; the dead must not rise; the dead shall not rise." All this endless talk about the North, about the necessity for submission to the Chaldean yoke, was seditious claptrap. Somehow, thinks the king, it must be ended. And now his chance has come. Reaching forward, he takes the Roll, and, cutting it up, flings

<sup>1</sup> Hab. ii, according to Rothstein's interesting analysis of the chapter.

it on the fire, and watches it as it burns. It was his only comment ; the ultimatum of an angry king to a seditious prophet, and to all those high Spiritual Powers, which lay behind him. How much further Jehoiakim might have gone, it is hard to say. There are unseen hands which hinder us, at times, from the evil we are fain to do. “ The king commanded Jerah-mel, the king’s son, and Seraiah, the son of Azriel, and Shelemiah, the son of Abdiel, to fetch Baruch the scribe, and Jeremiah the prophet ; but Jahveh hid them.”

Jeremiah was not the man unduly to consult his safety, or to sit down under such an insult. He seems to have sought out the king, apparently venturing his head, like] a second Elijah, within the palace. A stormy interview took place, in which the king, ignoring much that was innocent in the Roll, fastens on the prophet’s latest and most treasonable utterance : “ Why hast thou written therein saying, The King of Babylon shall certainly come and destroy this land, and shall cause to cease from it man and beast ? ” <sup>1</sup> But the prophet was not there to reason or retract. His real reply is a second copy of the Roll, already in preparation, with additions not unworthy of royal notice (verse 32).

So they parted, and probably never met again. For three years the king, who would not yield to reason, bent to force and paid tribute to the Chaldean.

<sup>1</sup> See chap. xxv, 8-10. Duhm rejects the entire passage xxxvi, 27-32. Erbt thinks that verses 29-31 are the comment of a later hand. The style is undoubtedly involved ; but I can hardly think that the most careless of Editors would follow the preceding narrative with such a note, unless he had some authority for a personal interview between the prophet and the king.

After that, tempted by the hope of succour from Egypt, he revolted. Then the land was overrun ; and finally, Nebuchadrezzar, raising the siege of Tyre, started southward to end the intolerable struggle by the capture of Jerusalem. Ere he arrived on the scene, Jehoiakim was no more. His end is wrapt in obscurity. According to 2 Chronicles xxxvi, 6, he was carried to Babylon in fetters ; according to 2 Kings xxiv, 6, he was gathered to his fathers ; while the LXX, in 2 Chronicles xxxvi, 8, says that he was buried in the garden of Uzzah.<sup>1</sup> It is easy to attempt to harmonize these varying accounts, following Ewald's lead ; but, in the absence of further information, results must be purely conjectural.

In chap. xxxvi, we are brought face to face with a soul in the crisis of its spiritual history. We know that the prophet's Roll was written to move the people to repentance ; and we cannot doubt that a merciful Providence directed it thus strangely to the palace, so as to make one last appeal to the conscience of a king. Jehoiakim might have listened ; he might have softened ; he might have yielded even then. But it is not easy for any of us suddenly to alter the standpoint from which we view things. The habits of a life are the masters of a man. We make our choice lightly, thoughtlessly ; but behind the choice we make is the character that makes us ; and finality is an important element in character. For a moment the awful conflict is waged ; then, the die is cast. The Roll is burned, and defiance hurled in the face of the Eternal. We know what that meant. It was easy to burn the Roll ; it was rewritten. It was easy to stifle conscience ; it was impossible to stay the progress of events. God has other ways of teaching

<sup>1</sup> γαροζαη.

those who will not hear ; fetters that cut deep into the flesh, and write truth upon the soul at last.

As a study in revelation, the chapter is full of interest. "In the fourth year of Jehoiakim came the word of Jahveh." So God speaks to men in the shock of battle, and the fall of empires ; and every turn of the political kaleidoscope witnesses some new and impressive development of the Divine purpose. The prophet dictates ; Baruch writes ; Jehudi carries the Roll. The human agency is manifold. A single copy of the Holy Scriptures represents almost every possible energy of the mind of man, from the highest intellectual effort in translation, to such simple arts as typefounding and bookbinding. Yet the result is always an unity, and declares itself with indisputable force to be the Word of God. The effect varies with the material on which it works ; but always it finds what is central in a man, and appeals to that. Most of all, we see here the indestructible vitality of the Word of God. No book has had so wonderful a history as the Bible. Mercilessly criticized, ludicrously travestied, deliberately refuted, it has been burned at the stake a hundred times, and every time, like the fabled Phoenix, has risen from its own ashes. How many a subtle intellect has sharpened its weapons on the Book. How many an idle dreamer has made merry over the grave in which he has buried this symbol of Superstition and Priesthood. They are all gone, their names lost in oblivion ; but the Bible lives. A few feet of earth cover the dust of her adversaries ; but the wide earth awaits her coming and hastens to own her sway. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My word shall not pass away." "The word of Jahveh endureth for ever."

## THE FALL OF THE CITY <sup>1</sup>

WE come now to the Fall of the city, the last act in the long tragedy which we have been following. Jerusalem lies on the edge of the central plateau of Palestine. Almost encircling it, are the two great valleys, Kedron and Hinnom, which unite and trend in a south-easterly direction toward the Dead Sea. Seen from the Mount of Olives, with the intervening valley in the foreground of the picture, the city seems to lie like an eyrie perched on the crest of a rock, a place of exceptional safety and strength. Thither as on eagle's wings, Jahveh had borne His people from the Desert ; and there, for four centuries, lofty and lonely like the eagle's brood, a great nation had gathered strength. Now the nest must be stirred, and the brood fly away.

The natural situation of Jerusalem explains the two most remarkable features in her history. First of all, the fact that she enters so late into the life of the Covenant people ; the other, the fact that, when at last she is absorbed into it, she becomes at once its heart and head. From that moment her history is one long battle. The first glimpse we have of Jerusalem is characteristic. Four great kings, each with an army at his back, have swept the fertile plain of Jordan, passing within sight of the city, themselves to fall a prey to the agile, light-armed band of Abram

<sup>1</sup> See chaps. xxxiv, 1-7 ; xxi, 1-7 ; xxxvii, xxxviii, xxxix, and lii.

the Hebrew. As he returns to his home on the heights of Hebron, Abram halts under the shadow of these frowning crags, while Melchisedec, the King of Salem, comes to meet him with what is, in spite of the sacramental theories of modern theologians, a very simple and human offering of bread and wine, refreshment for his weary men. Thus, from the dawn of History, the city smiles down on us, a home of peace amid a scene of war. During the four centuries when Israel was in Egypt, Palestine was annexed as a province by the Pharaohs. An Egyptian Resident had his seat in Jerusalem ; and letters are extant in which his withdrawal is deprecated as throwing open the floodgates of anarchy and civil strife throughout the land. After the entrance of Israel into Canaan, Jerusalem seems to have defied their assaults. It remained in possession of the Jebusite, boasting that "the blind and the lame" could garrison a city which Nature herself had made impregnable to assault. After it changed hands, Jerusalem became the City of David and, with the advent of the Ark, the Sanctuary of the national life. Again and again the tide of battle washed up against her walls. For brief intervals she fell into the hands of aliens ; but always to revert to her normal condition of isolation and independence. Even Sennacherib who, like a schoolboy, boasts that he has harried the nests and stolen the eggs of every nation under the sun,<sup>1</sup> fails here. The eagle's nest hangs high out of his reach ; and, with a flap of her wings, the brooding bird strikes death to the aggressor's heart.

Times have changed since then. Let the reader make one more valiant effort to realize the political situation during the reign of the last king of David's House. Zedekiah reigned eleven years—from 597 to

<sup>1</sup> Isa. x, 14.

586 B.C. At first content to play the part of vassal to the Chaldean king, he was sucked into the whirlpool of Syrian politics and placed the city at the disposal of the International Congress which met in 593. Of that, as we have seen, nothing came. For some years the King remained inactive, chafing under a yoke which he did not venture to throw off; but the Egyptian party in Jerusalem grew stronger, and forced his hand.<sup>1</sup> With 588 came the crisis. Psammetichus had joined Osiris and the heroes beyond the river of Death. Hophrah was now on the throne, a man of restless, ambitious spirit, bent on high enterprise. Relations between Egypt and Judah grew closer, and resulted in a defensive alliance in which the Ammonites seem to have joined. Meantime the Chaldean king was prosecuting the hopeless siege of Tyre. There seemed a fair chance of success; at least there was the certainty of a sharp and decisive conflict. So formidable a coalition could not be neglected. Even Tyre must be forfeited, rather than all Syria lost. A large body of men was detached and sent South to quell the mutinous tribes. In a lively passage Ezekiel reflects the prevailing uncertainty as to its objective. The army halts, and sacrifices are offered. Two arrows, one with Rabath-Ammon inscribed on it, the other with Jerusalem, are thrown into a helmet and shaken in presence of the Teraphim. Then the King pulls out that of Jerusalem, and the die is cast.<sup>2</sup> This is of course prophetic imagination. What really decided Nebuchadrezzar to move against Jerusalem was the timely submission of the Ammonites.

Meantime, within the city things had gone from bad to worse. The best of the old aristocracy, the blue blood of the land, had been drained away, and

<sup>1</sup> See Ezek. xvii, 6.

<sup>2</sup> See Ezek. xxi, 20.

men of a wild, irresponsible, and revolutionary spirit had usurped their place. Moreover many of the vessels of the Temple had been deported,<sup>1</sup> and thus, while the Temple service was shorn of its glory, the Priesthood lost much of its influence over the people, who were more readily impressed by a solemn pageant than by argument or appeal. Throughout the reign of Zedekiah the priests seem to have supported the king ; the nobles, on the other hand, browbeat or ignored him. A reed in their hand, they could make him play any tune they pleased ; and were prepared, when it was needful, to break their toy and fling it aside. Through these dark days Jeremiah must have stood practically alone, a witness for the truth which could be vindicated only by the rejection of his people.

CHAP. xxxiv, 1-7. The Chaldean army advanced along the coast line, subduing one by one the towns of the Shepheleh, as Sennacherib had done a century before. An invading army must travel light, unencumbered either by baggage or captives ; and the unfortunate inhabitants of these fallen towns were despatched at once, no doubt in chains, to Babylon.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See chap. xxvii.

<sup>2</sup> See chap. lii, 28. In the original the passage reads : "This is the people whom Nebuchadrezzar carried captive in the seventh year, 3,023 Jews ; in the eighteenth year of Nebuchadrezzar, he carried captive from Jerusalem 832 persons ; in the twenty-third year of Nebuchadrezzar, Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, carried captive 745 persons ; all the persons were 4,600." Now the seventh year of Nebuchadrezzar coincides with the brief reign of Jehoiachin. But, as the numbers here given do not agree with 2 Kings xxiv, 14, Ewald proposes to read the seventeenth year. The verse will then refer to the year preceding the Fall of the City ; the eighteenth year of Nebuchadrezzar to that of the Fall ; and the twenty-third year of Nebuchadrezzar to a subsequent

Lachish and Azekah alone remained ; when these had fallen, the capital stood full in view. At this time, late in 598, the prophet received a message from Jahveh for the King. The enemy was still distant. Egypt was strong ; and it was evident that Zedekiah did not realize his danger. As to the final issue, there is no doubt in the prophet's mind. By siege or surrender, the city must fall. Yet if the king's eyes could be opened, there was still time, by an unconditional surrender, to avert the horrors of a siege. We note the conciliatory attitude Jeremiah adopts to Zedekiah, and the reassuring words as to his personal fate with which he comforts him—his personal fate with which he comforts him. (v. 2) "Thus saith Jahveh, Behold, I am giving this city into the hands of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire. (v. 3) And thou shalt not escape out of his hand, but shalt surely be taken and delivered into his hand ; and thine eyes shall see the eyes of the king of Babylon, and he shall speak with thee mouth to mouth, and thou shalt come to Babylon. (v. 4) Only hear the word of Jahveh, Zedekiah king of Judah : Thus saith Jahveh concerning thee, Thou shalt not die by the sword. (v. 5) Thou shalt die in peace ; and, as the burnings of thy fathers, so shall they burn odours for thee, and they shall lament for thee, Ah, lord ! for I have spoken the word, saith Jahveh."

[Chap. xxxiv, 1 is Editorial, inflated in style, and worthless alongside of verses 6-8. the original heading which it has displaced. The phrase : He shall speak with thee mouth to mouth (verse 3), is doubtful. The LXX omit it ; but it occurs in another passage (xxxii, 1-5) which is evidently based on this. Whether we accept or reject the phrase, it is not

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incursion of which Josephus, *Antiq.* x, 9, 7, may be accepted as confirmation.

meant to convey the idea of a kind and brotherly reception on the part of the Chaldean king. Any words of comfort the prophet has to speak begin with verse 4. Rather the emphasis laid on this personal interview is meant to exclude all hope of escape.]

Chap. xxxvii, 11. Early in the spring of 587 the aspect of affairs changed for the better; a relieving force from Egypt moved Northward. We can easily understand the wild joy with which the news was received in the city, already beginning to feel the pinch of hunger. The immediate result was undoubtedly satisfactory. The Chaldean camp was struck, and the army moved Southward to meet the foe. But Egypt was still true to the description Isaiah gives of her: a Sit-still, full of brag and bluster, prodigal of promises, but chary of performance. Without striking a blow, the relieving force retired into quarters; the Chaldeans reappeared before Jerusalem and the cordon of Death was drawn closer about the city.

Chap. xxxiv, 8-22. About the same time an event occurred within the city which illustrates the temper of the people, a curious blend of the superstitious and irreligious. Realizing the desperate straits in which they had placed themselves, yet not without hope that Jahveh might interpose to deliver them, they entered into a solemn league and covenant, which must have vividly recalled the great Reformation of Josiah's reign. The King himself appears to have been the leader of the movement; and whatever vitality it had was probably due to him. According to the Deuteronomic code,<sup>1</sup> every Hebrew who had sold himself into bondage to one of his brethren must be liberated at the expiry of six years, and

<sup>1</sup> See Deut. xv, 12-18.

provided with means to make a fresh start in life. It is questionable whether this law was ever put into force. Certainly it was already a dead letter. The city was crowded with slaves, men and women, who, driven within the walls by the advance of the enemy, and reduced to beggary by the high prices common in those unsettled times, had sold themselves to their more fortunate brethren. Face to face with dire necessity, the people felt the prick of conscience ; and a royal proclamation was made, conferring freedom on all such bondmen. The matter was gone into with all the formalities of a religious rite. Sacrifices were offered, and representatives of all classes passed between the bleeding parts, binding themselves to fulfil their vow.<sup>1</sup> The silence of the prophet in regard to this transaction at the time, probably means that he had little faith in it ; and his adverse judgment was justified by results. Scarcely had the solemn engagement been made than the Chaldean camp, for reasons then unknown, broke up, and the siege ended. Had there been a grain of sincerity in the people, such a coincidence must have stirred them up to make good their part of the bargain, and to inaugurate still larger measures of reform. The result was very different. No sooner was the immediate pressure relaxed, than they repented of their repentance. It appeared to them that they had acted rashly. They had incurred a heavy financial responsibility. They had imperilled the safety of the State by flooding their streets with a multitude of irresponsible freedmen. Pretexts were easily found or made ; and, without having tasted the joy of freedom, and before they had time to reckon their numbers or realize their power, the slaves were

<sup>1</sup> See verses 17-22.

dragged back to a bondage all the more bitter because of disappointed hopes.

It was at this point that the prophet interposed. He assures them that, in rescinding the measure of justice so lately passed, they were disowning the authority under which they had acted. He pointed out, in that passionless and almost cynical tone which he could adopt toward evil-doers, the inevitable consequence. "Thus saith Jahveh: Ye have profaned My name in causing every man his bondman, and every man his bondmaid, whom ye had let go at their pleasure, to return" (verse 16). It is not possible to mistake the meaning of so noble an utterance. The cause of Humanity is the cause of God. The sin of Judah lay, not in the breach of a formal promise, but in the denial to their own flesh and blood of that freedom which is the birthright of all. And now, what they had refused to do to others, Jahveh would do to them. They had remanded their slaves to their tasks; Jahveh, on His part, retaliates: "Behold I give you your dismissal." Erewhile his servants, they are handed over to famine and the sword (verse 17). The stern words were speedily made good. Almost as the prophet spoke, tidings reached them that the Egyptians had gone home, and the Chaldeans were once more at their gates. The siege was resumed, and pressed. Famine played into the hands of the besiegers; while the slaves, who might have been their allies in defence, stood by, sullen and disaffected.

[In verse 8, the phrase, "To proclaim liberty unto them," must, if retained, be rendered: To proclaim for them a freedom. The pronoun refers, not to the slaves who were to be set free; for they have not yet been mentioned; but to the people in whose name ("for them") the King acts. But the phrase is absent in the LXX; probably borrowed from verse 17.

Verse 9. Driver reads : That none should serve themselves of him, to wit, of a Jew, his brother. Duhm and Erbt (following the LXX) read : That no man from Judah should be in bondage. Duhm thinks that slaves from the North (Shechem or Shiloh) might have fared worse ! Giesebrécht reads : That they should not, any longer, keep them in bondage.

Duhm rejects the entire passage, verses 12-22. Erbt rescues a single phrase in verse 17. (Behold, I give you your dismissal.) Duhm thinks the whole transaction was purely political and prudential. Erbt allows it a religious colour in so far as the people hoped by an act of spontaneous generosity to others (Jahveh ein übriges zu thun), to secure Jahve's favour for themselves. Both critics reject all reference to the Deuteronomic code and find in verses 12-22 the attempt of a later Editor to introduce a theological significance which is baseless. No doubt verses 13-16 are a thoroughgoing paraphrase in approved Editorial style. But for verses 17-22 there must, I think, be a base of fact. In its original form the text may have read thus : verse 17 : "Therefore, thus saith Jahve, ye have not hearkened to Me to give dismissal every man to his brother, and every man to his neighbour. Behold, I give you your dismissal, saith Jahve—to the sword, and to the pestilence, and the famine. (Verse 18) And I will give the men who have not kept the terms of the covenant which they made before the calf, which they cut in twain when they passed between the parts of it, (Verse 20) I will even give them into the hands of their enemies, etc."

Offended by the phrase : "Before the calf," the Massoretes have altered the pointing ("Before Me—the calf"). Grammar is hopelessly wrecked ; but propriety and theology are saved ! The LXX, pursuing an imaginary reference to the golden calf in the wilderness (based on verse 13) read : The calf which they made to worship it.]

Chaps. xxi, 1-7, xxxvii, 1-10. Hitherto we have seen the prophet waiting on the King. It was now the King's turn to wait upon the prophet. During the interval of the siege he sent Pashhur, the son of Melcaiah, and Zephaniah, the priest, pressing Jeremiah to inquire of Jahveh whether the temporary relief meant permanent deliverance. The prophet could

hold out no such hope ; already, and without a blow struck, the Egyptians had retired. A demoniac energy inspired the Chaldeans, so that, were they all wounded and even dead men in their tents, they should yet rise up, a phantom host, with fingers tipped with fire, and burn the city (chap. xxxvii, 10). The asperity of the prophet's tone, and the absence of the comfortable words with which he has been used to encourage the King, were no doubt due to the disapproval with which he viewed the public breach of faith in connexion with the slaves, and the King's part, however passive, in it.

[The two passages cited above are so much alike that the question of their mutual relation is raised. Duhm regards the former as a paraphrase of the latter. Giesebrécht, on the other hand, emphasizes the indications of a slightly different situation, and the absence in the former (xxi, 1-7, which he regards as the earlier) of any reference to the Relieving Force from Egypt. Stade endeavours to interweave the two narratives. An examination of xxxvii, 1-5, leads to the following conclusions : verses 1-2, which introduce Zedekiah as if for the first time, are Editorial. So, and for the same reason, are verses 4, 5. In verse 3, which remains, the King sends his messengers to the prophet, inviting him to "intercede" for them. But, according to verse 7, what they invite him to do is "to inquire" for them. Evidently, the two verses were not originally connected. On the other hand, in xxi, 1, 2, we have the notice of a Deputation sent to the prophet inviting him "to inquire" of Jahveh, to which in the sequel (verses 3-7) there is no adequate response. Combine xxi, 1-2, with xxxvii, 6-7 (the latter read, according to the LXX : "Thus saith Jahveh, Thus shalt thou say to the King of Judah which hath sent to thee, that thou mayest inquire of Me," etc.), and we have first a royal request, and then the prophet's response. Some difficulty occurs in connexion with the names of the deputation. Erbt is probably correct in giving a preference to xxi, 1. Jehucal has been introduced into xxxvii, 3, from xxxviii, 1 ; while Pashhur, the son of Malcaiah (confounded with Pashhur, the son of Immer), is omitted from

xxxvii, 3, and introduced into xxxviii, 1 as an enemy of Jeremiah.

xxi, 3-7, is conventional and Editorial. It is otherwise with xxi, 8-10.]

Chap. xxi, 8-10. It was not only with kings and kings' envoys, our prophet had to do. Now, as always, his first thought must have been for the people who, blinded and misled, were still Jahveh's flock. His appeal to them during the siege has been preserved for us in a brief fragment. The style is almost epigrammatic in its concise and antithetic brevity, and suggests a repetition which must have made it familiar to all. The issue is put before them with a merciful plainness, which, however offensive to delicate ears, precluded the possibility of mistake. With their leaders as they are, the prophet assures them, it is impossible to save the city ; what is yet possible for them, one and all, is to save themselves : "Thus saith Jahveh, Behold I set before you the way of life and the way of death. He that abideth in the city shall die by the sword ; he that goeth out and falleth to the Chaldeans shall live, and his life shall be his spoil." Such an utterance was of course open to various interpretations, according to the standpoint of his audience. To what then did he summon them ? To desertion, or secession ? To surrender of a sacred charge, or submission to the will of Heaven ? One thing is certain, the prophet's words did not fall on deaf ears. Quite a number left the city and formed a Jewish party in the Chaldean camp. One of these, Gedaliah, was destined to be the saviour of his people and to add to the obligations under which the prophet already lay to his noble house.

Chap. xxxvii, 11-16. Hitherto Jeremiah had preserved his freedom, moving up and down within the city, receiving and returning official visits. But

this was soon to end. Taking advantage of the interruption of the siege, he starts for Anathoth to take possession of some property which had fallen to him there. At the gate of the city he is intercepted by the officer in charge, Urijah, who, as "the grandson of Hananiah," may have been a descendant of the prophet's protagonist during Jehoiakim's reign.<sup>1</sup> Urijah charges him with treason as a deserter, and hurries him before the authorities. It must be confessed that the prophet's action, under the circumstances, was not wise. It was open to misconstruction which a wise man should, if possible, avoid. On the other hand, the honest heat with which he repels the insinuation is absolutely reassuring : "Thou liest, I am not deserting." The evidence, however, was against him, and the judges were prejudiced. He was roughly handled and thrust into a dungeon, and there for many days he remained.

Chap. xxxvii, 17-21. Then occurred one of those incidents which lend dramatic interest to the story, a secret interview between Jeremiah and the King. By stealth, probably under cover of night, he is brought into the royal presence. Zedekiah cannot yet believe that Jahveh has given up the city ; daily, hourly he looks for some miraculous interposition. He asks the prophet, Is there any word from Jahveh ? In a short, sharp sentence his hopes are shattered : "Thou shalt be delivered into the hands of the King of Babylon." For a moment the prophet, unnerved by the loneliness and privation of his prison life, breaks down. He asks the King what he has done, that he should be treated thus like a felon, and entreats that he may not be sent back to the dungeon, where he must die of hunger. It is the one trace of weakness he betrays through these weary months. On the other hand, a gleam of unmis-

<sup>1</sup> See chap. xxix.

takable nobility lights up the bearing of the wretched King. At the risk of his own life, he spares the man who has just doomed him to a cruel fate. Risking the resentment of the princes, he sends Jeremiah to the comparative comfort of the guard-room, and makes the needful provision for his wants. It was there his cousin Hanameel found him out, and transacted some family business of which the reader has heard.

Chap xxxviii. Jeremiah was no longer in a position to harangue large audiences,<sup>1</sup> but his friends were admitted to his rooms, and on them, with the pertinacity of intense conviction, he urges his policy of non-resistance. Evidently his mouth must be stopped. It was now the turn of the princes to wait upon the King. It was not their intention, in making this appeal, to recognize the royal authority. They had not scrupled to act without that, and even in defiance of it, on previous occasions. Rather it was their purpose to force the King's hand, and compel him openly to break off all relations with the prophet. Were he to refuse, were he still to befriend one who was so evidently playing into the hands of the enemy, he himself would be hopelessly discredited before the people. Zedekiah felt his position keenly. He would fain have stood by the man on whose word he had hung so often, but he dared not. With a fretful, almost childish protest ("The King is not he who can do anything against you") he lets them have their way. Once again Jeremiah is immured, not now in the public prison, but in a private dungeon, a damp and filthy place, where the horrors of pestilence were added to the pangs of famine. There he must have ended his days, but for help from an unexpected quarter.

<sup>1</sup> xxxviii, 1 ("All the people") is read by the LXX ἐπὶ τῷ λαῷ.

Ebedmelech, the Ethiopian eunuch, was one of an unfortunate class who paid with the loss of their manhood for the safety and comfort they enjoyed, and owed to the very limits which misfortune had imposed on them the almost unlimited influence they possessed in the wild and passionate life of an Eastern palace. The story of Ebedmelech's relations with the prophet, is a little idyll of simple human goodness amid the intrigues of the Court ; it charms us with the sweetness and grace of a wild flower. Evidently the two men had drawn together, equally alone, though for different reasons ; the one an alien, the other an outlaw ; the one, physically a dry tree, expanding, under the influence of the other, into a beautiful summer of unselfish devotion. When he heard of the prophet's imprisonment Ebedmelech sought out the King, and roundly charged him with a cruel outrage, taxing him with the guilt of a crime he had not the courage to prevent.<sup>1</sup> His appeal is successful ; and he obtains leave from the ever irresolute King. Returning to his quarters in the palace, he secures the help of able-bodied men, and proceeds to the mouth of the dungeon. Lowering by means of ropes a heap of rags, he bids the prophet put them under his armpits, and draws him, thus delicately cared for, into the light of day. "Inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of these my brethren ye did it unto Me." Ebedmelech's kindly interposition did not lose its reward. Softly, amid the crash of the falling city, sounded the peaceful words of promise which the prophet was commissioned to speak : "Thou shalt not be given into the hands of the men thou fearest. Thy life shall be a prey to thee because thou

<sup>1</sup> So according to the LXX—implying an original text which differed in form slightly, but in meaning greatly, from the present M.T.

hast put thy trust in Me, saith Jahveh" (chap. xxxix, 16-18).

For the last time King and prophet again met. Of this last interview full particulars have been preserved. From the guard-room, the King causes the prophet to be fetched by a secret passage.<sup>1</sup> Even yet it would appear the King has not quite given up hope. Some sign from Jahveh there must be: silence on the prophet's part means no more than stubbornness. Solemnly, he adjures him to speak out. But Jeremiah was in no mood for this imposed interview. Why waste his words on one who would not hear? Why commit himself to one who, perhaps, meant to betray him to his enemies? The King protests; as himself dependent on Jahveh for life, he will not lay a perjured finger on a living thing.<sup>2</sup> Moved by his evident sincerity and pitiable distress, the prophet unbends. Once more he pleads with him to take the only safe and manly course, to save his people, if not himself, by surrender. A curious side glance is given us here into the mind of one of the strangest and unhappiest of mortals. Even in this critical hour Zedekiah thinks neither of the loss of his throne, nor of the sufferings of his people, but of his own dignity. "I am afraid

<sup>1</sup> "The Third entry" (A.V.). Probably we should read: The gate of the Shalishim. These were picked men who were in attendance on a king and formed his body-guard (2 Kings vii, 2 and ix, 25). Driver (on 2 Sam. xxiii, 8) renders the word: knights. The origin of the term is obscure. Duhm points out that the Temple was guarded by "a third part" (2 Kings xi, 5); but that probably was only a temporary arrangement. We may suppose that the entry here referred to was a secret passage by which the officers of the guard might pass from their quarters to the palace.

<sup>2</sup> "As Jahveh liveth that hath made us this life"—compare the end of the verse ("Thy life").

of the Jews that are fallen away to the Chaldeans, lest they deliver me into their hands, and they mock me." Once again, the prophet speaks, doing his uttermost to hearten the King to play the hard but honourable part. He reminds him that the Chaldean general will certainly not hand over a royal captive to other and irresponsible hands. Even if he did, what then? Which is more to be feared, the gibes of men who could only score off his misfortunes, or the bitter reproaches of those, the women and children of the palace, who must share his fate? In long sad line he sees them file past, going to face the horrors of a captive's lot. "They shall say to thee :

They have seduced and prevailed against thee,  
The men thou held'st friends.  
When deep in mire thy feet were sunken,  
Then drew they back."

[There is no mystery about these lines, such as Duhm conjures up. The prophet does not profess to have received them in vision, nor does he claim for them any prophetic authority. They are a snatch of a popular song, setting forth, in a homely and proverbial way, the Fortunes of a Fool. The application to the King's case was plain enough; those who decoyed him, would be the first to desert him.]

What impression was made, we are left to gather from the issue. Abruptly the King breaks off the interview, with a parting request: "Let no man know what we have said; if they question you about our interview, what I said, what you said; say to them, I presented my supplication to the King, that he would not cause me to return to Jonathan's house to die there" (verse 26). That is Zedekiah's last word, and it is characteristic of the man: Nothing or anything, only do not give us away! The prophet does his best to screen him. In those days the sense

of truth was as quick as it is to-day, but it was different. Truth was not abstract or verbal, but concrete—truth in action; loyalty to others, particularly to those in need, most of all to one's king. So Jeremiah, being a true man, told a lie, and saved the King.

Chaps. xxxix and lii. With this ends our record of the siege. After a struggle, which cannot have lasted less than a full year, in the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the fourth month, in the ninth day of the month, a breach was made in the wall of the city through which the besiegers poured in. The Chaldean officers, Nergal-Sharezar, the chief of the Magi, and Nebu-shazban, the chief of the Eunuchs, set up their seats of judgment in the market place,<sup>1</sup> an open ground near the gates; and, amid wild confusion and gross outrage, the work of destruction began.<sup>2</sup> Meantime, the King and his household had fled. The wall of the city, running up into the Tyropean valley, formed a narrow angle, near which must have stood one of the city-gates, leading, through the King's garden, toward the plain. By this gate they fled, but were pursued and captured, and sent Northward to Riblah, where Nebuchadrezzar was still lingering.

<sup>1</sup> xxxix, 3. Instead of six officers, a closer scrutiny of the text discovers the names of two. Nergal-Sharezar is twice named. Sam-gar is the same (by inversion of letters) as Rab-mag, Chief of the Magi. i.e. the name of an office, not of a man. Nebo goes with Sarsachim (to be read here, as in verse 13; Nebu-shazban). Rab-saris means Chief of the Eunuchs, again the name of an office. Thus verse 3 corresponds with verse 13. For the Magi (warriors, who, on the conquest of Babylon, assumed the rôle of the Old Magi or Chaldean priests), and the part they played in Babylonian history, particularly in the reign of Nebuchadrezzar (who practically owed to them his throne), see *Les Chaldeens*, by Delattre.

<sup>2</sup> See Lam. v.

There the King's sons were slain before his eyes, and then his eyes were put out. Thus in a horror of great darkness ends a tragic career.

[Chap. xxxix is evidently composite; an attempt from various sources to sum up details as to the final scene. Verses 1b, 2 are borrowed from 2 Kings xxv, 1-3; and verses 4-10 are borrowed from the same source. Verses 11-13 are another addition from quite a different source, the accuracy of which can hardly be established, alongside of 1ii, 12. The original text, as drawn from Baruch's narrative, is represented by verse 1a, verse 3, and verses 14-18.]

From all that has gone before, it is not difficult to form some conception of Zedekiah, the last king who sat on the throne of David. He was one of those who have the misfortune to be born out of due time. Personally he was amiable and attractive, not without an element of nobility, as we have seen, in his composition. At almost any other time he might have occupied the throne with an easy grace, as one to the manner born; but he had not strength of character, nor force of will to cope with such evil times. A tool in the hands of the princes, he had just enough of self-consciousness to make his position intolerable. If not in the true sense of the word religious, he was by no means without religious instincts. He believed in Jahveh as Israel's God, and reverenced the prophet as an oracle of Heaven. He had an insatiable craving for ghostly advice; unfortunately, he had not the courage to act up to it when it was given.

We notice as characteristic of the man an overweening confidence in his own fortunes, in the inviolable sanctity of his person, and in the safety of any cause committed to his royal hands. He is always on the outlook for some miraculous interposition to vindicate

the authority by which he reigns. It is this combination of high idealism and moral weakness, that lends a subtle complexity to an otherwise shallow character, and introduces an element of dramatic intensity into his career. A parallel may be found in the character of Richard II, as drawn by Shakespeare.

Oh, that I were as great as is my grief,  
Or less than is my name !

Jeremiah's relations with Zedekiah are markedly different from his relations with Jehoiakim. One cannot imagine the prophet stooping to ask a favour of the latter, as he does of the former. At first, according to chap. xxxiv, 5, he predicts a peaceful and honourable end for Zedekiah ; and if, disappointed by his outcome, he alters his tone, and speaks plain hard truth, it is never without an undertone of kindly solicitude. The note of personal antagonism is entirely absent. Zedekiah is always at his best when with the prophet, who, in his turn, does his best to make a man of him. But one cannot build on sand or mould with water. Zedekiah's career teaches us something of the perils which surround, not the wicked, but the weak in daily life, and of the worthlessness of religious convictions which are not backed by the moral force that acts up to them.

It is not easy for us to understand what the Fall of Jerusalem meant to the Jew of that age. With the city, went the home and the Temple. It was domestic, national, and religious ruin, dealt at a single blow. The whole system of things into which he had been born, and in which he had lived with absolute assurance, dissolved before his eyes, and left him with no landmarks and no aims in life. Far away,

from distant Babylon, reach us lingering echoes of the crash.<sup>1</sup> For two generations, lonely figures hovered round the ruins, conveying to us, in broken and pathetic utterance, a reflexion of the desolation on which they gazed.<sup>2</sup> For centuries the black days when the siege began, when the first breach was made, when the Temple was fired, were marked in the Jewish calendar as national Fasts.<sup>3</sup> And yet, looking back, we can see that what seemed the end of all was the beginning of a new and higher stage in the nation's life. The symbol was lost ; the scaffolding removed ; but the inner meaning, the eternal truth came nearer to realization.

In Babylon they breathed a freer air, saw life on a larger scale, and came into touch with forces which were shaping the world that was yet to be. The past had been for their own training ; they were now face to face with their appointed task. Six centuries later, after another and even more terrible catastrophe, St. John, writing from Patmos, tells how, being in the spirit, he saw the new Jerusalem descend from God out of Heaven, prepared as a bride for her husband. And we have seen how the prophet, as he peered through his prison windows on the desolation wrought by war and pestilence, had the same great vision granted him. The eagle's nest was harried at last. The Holy City lay in ruins. As an earthly empire, Judah was no more ; but as a spiritual force, a kingdom of Divine truths and ideals, her career had just begun.

For Jeremiah the Fall of Jerusalem meant more than it could mean for any other. Yet he had his own religious experience behind him, a bridge between

<sup>1</sup> See Ezekiel, *passim*.   <sup>2</sup> See on chap. xxxiii, 10-13.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Zechariah vii, 5.

the mournful past, and a brighter future. We have seen how bravely he kept the bridge, and with it a passage for himself and for his people, from the narrow and national to the universal and spiritual, from the Old Covenant to the New.

## THE FLIGHT TO EGYPT

### CHAPTERS XL-XLIV

AFTER the Fall of Jerusalem, probably as the result of a friendly interposition on the part of Gedaliah, who had left the city for the Chaldean camp, Jeremiah regained his freedom, and left the guard-room for his own house. A month later Nebuzaradan, the Chaldean generalissimo, appeared on the scene. In ignorance of what had happened, and, finding the prophet, a person of consideration, moving about at liberty, he carried him with the rest of the captives northward on the way to Babylon. At Ramah a halt was made, and on further investigation, and possibly as the result of a second intervention on Gedaliah's part, the prophet was again released. Summoned into the presence of the General, he was allowed to make his choice, either to remain in the land or to go to Babylon under the escort of the Nebuzaradan who undertook to look well after him.<sup>1</sup> At this point

<sup>1</sup> Verses 1-6 is, in its present form, Editorial. It begins : The Word of Jahve came to Jeremiah ; but no fresh revelation is recorded. The phrase has become conventional, and is used as the heading of a new section. In verse 1 Nebuzaradan is said to have "taken him bound in chains." But that is probably an anticipation of the original narrative as given in verse 2 ; where however "to take the prophet" is merely to fetch him. Non-combatants, like the prophet, would not be thrown into chains. In verses 2, 3, the religious phraseology of the prophet is put into the mouth of the Chaldean soldier. It was quite in accordance with the ideas of a later age that

the English translation indicates a certain hesitance on the prophet's part: "Now while he (Jeremiah) was not yet gone back, he (Nebuzaradan) said to him, Go back to Gedeliah" (verse 5). The prophet may have been uncertain whether he could do better service by remaining with the little handful in the land, or by casting in his lot with the exiles in Babylon. The text is obscure.<sup>1</sup> However we understand the difficult phrase, we may be sure that Jeremiah felt no disinclination to remain in the land of his birth, and labour, with men like Gedaliah, for the future of his people.

No man was better fitted than Gedaliah to assume the reins of government at this critical time. The representative of a noble family which, for two previous generations had rendered distinguished service to the State, he was known and respected by all his countrymen. Many of these gathered round him, "captains of the forces that were in the fields," i.e. armed bands of men who had escaped from the fortified cities of Judah, and maintained a guerilla warfare in the open country. No doubt, they were glad to capitulate on the favourable terms which Gedaliah could offer them. Others came from beyond the Jordan, from Ammon and Moab, to share the comparative prosperity which the new regime ensured. Among these were Ishmael, the son of Nethaniah, a member of the royal

he should indicate to his prisoners that Jahveh, their national God, had given them into his hands.

<sup>1</sup> Another rendering of the phrase is as follows: There shall be no return, said he, therefore go back; implying that the choice for Babylon, if once made, must be final. Another rendering: He, i.e. the King of Babylon, shall not return; as if he would assure the prophet that no resumption of hostilities was to be feared.

family,<sup>1</sup> Johanan, the son of Kareah,<sup>2</sup> and Seraiah, the son of Tanhumeth, and the sons of Ephai, the Netophathite<sup>3</sup> and Jezaniah, the son of Maacathite.<sup>4</sup> Forsaking the ruins of the plague-stricken city, Gedaliah removed to the breezy heights of Mizpah, where he administered justice and maintained the semblance of a Court. Autumn was near ; the vines, the summer fruits, and the olives were ripening fast, and there was every prospect of an abundant harvest.<sup>5</sup> But a dark cloud was already rising above the horizon. It is probable that Ishmael was never sincere in the support he gave to Gedaliah. He may have regarded himself as, by his birthright, the legitimate leader of the people ; he was certainly not unwilling to intrigue in his own interest. Treating Gedaliah as an upstart and a rival, he determined to put him out of the way, and to carry the little colony across the Jordan to the land of Ammon. There were those who did not like Ishmael, who distrusted his lofty ways and large utterance, and boded no good from his presence in the new settlement. The Governor was warned, but discredited the warning and declined to take any steps in self-defence. The forfeit was his life. With ten men Ishmael feasted at the Governor's table, and then slew him under his own roof tree.

One crime demands another, and Ishmael's hands

<sup>1</sup> See chap. xli, 1.

<sup>2</sup> Drop from the list the name of Jonathan, which appears no more ; probably a variant of Johanan.

<sup>3</sup> For Netophah, apparently a town not far from Jerusalem, see Neh. xii, 28.

<sup>4</sup> Maachah, an Aramean state, East of Jordan.

<sup>5</sup> See chap. xl. 10. Erbt notes, as an indication of the essential truthfulness of the story, that, in the sequel (verse 12) only the grapes and the summer fruits were gathered in. The olives ripened later. Ere they were ready for the press, the situation had changed.

were soon full of work. The harvest festival, one of the three great feasts of the year, fell on the seventh month ; and was therefore already due. This year the feast must be a fast ; for the Holy City and the Sacred Place were in ruins. Still the pilgrims gathered in, in little groups. One of these, men from Shiloh and Shechem, were travelling South, their heads shaven, with rent clothes and all the signs of mourning about them. The road from Shechem to Jerusalem passed at a short distance from Mizpah, within sight of its gates. Feigning a sorrow like their own, and as if he too would join their pilgrimage,<sup>1</sup> Ishmael met them, inviting them to stay for a little, and share the hospitality of the Governor. Sympathy is always attractive, and Gedaliah's name was one to conjure with. They were easily persuaded ; but no sooner were they within the gates than they were slain, and their bodies flung into a great pit which was either the moat of an old fortress, built by Asa at Mizpah, or a cistern within its walls.<sup>2</sup> The scale on which the crime was conceived, and the thoroughness with which it was executed, may have been meant by Ishmael to bespeak him a person of force, and fit to be a leader of men. It is difficult to suggest any other explanation. The pilgrims did not know of the Governor's death, and therefore could not have spread news of it ; while the simple gifts they carried to the altar must have

<sup>1</sup> So in the M.T. (" He went forth to meet them, weeping all along as he went." Probably the participle is to be omitted as redundant.) The LXX read : He went out to meet them and they were weeping as they went. Thus Ishmael is relieved of the charge of gross hypocrisy. But, following on verse 5, the reading seems burdensome and feeble.

<sup>2</sup> "A great pit." So the LXX. Instead of : Because of Gedaliah (Byad Gedaliah), read as above (Bôr Gadôl).

been quite inconsiderable as spoil, especially in the open country, and at harvest time. It is just as difficult to explain the clemency which spared ten of them, who promised to discover stores of wheat and barley and oil and honey, buried in the earth. It was such a mistake as the most astute may make. The stores were not discovered ; but the men escaped, and spread the tidings of a dastardly crime. Anxious now for his own safety, Ishmael moved eastward from Mizpah to Gibeon. On a site still known as El Jib, near a large stone tank, or reservoir, supplied by upland springs (the “great waters” of chap. xli, 12), Gibeon lies on the watershed of central Palestine, and commands the pass which leads, by way of Michmash, to Gilgal and the Fords of Jordan. By this route, no doubt, Ishmael meant to reach his destination. But his train was heavy, and his movements necessarily slow. With a troop of light armed men, Johanan overtook him at Gibeon. No battle was fought, for the followers of Ishmael deserted on the approach of the rescue party ; while he himself, with eight men, escaped, and disappeared from history, a right royal villain.

Recovering the captives, among whom were several ladies of the Court, Johanan moved Southward to the Inn of Chimham, near Bethlehem, on the road to Egypt. His idea may have been that the Chaldeans would hold him responsible for the murder of Gedaliah ; or at least that, as the result of it, a more rigorous and probably martial law would be imposed on the land. Indeed a long succession of calamities had unnerved the people. The soil they trod seemed drenched with blood ; every wind blew “Treason and murder” about their ears. All their cry was : Down to Egypt. But such a step was without precedent in their history,

and they hesitated to take it. Good fortune had put into their hands the one man who, of all others, was held in reputation as a prophet ; and, with due formalities, the question was referred to Jeremiah. We infer from his words that the prophet was doubtful of the wisdom of the step proposed ; but he acceded to their request that he should inquire of Jahveh, binding them over with solemn promises to abide by his decision. Every hour was precious ; yet, such was the importance of the crisis, ten days were spent in meditation and prayer. Then he spoke out. First of all, he endeavoured to reassure their minds, placing before them the manifest advantage of remaining where they were, among surroundings fitted to stimulate their activity and cement their union, and where they might still enjoy the protection of the Chaldean King, of whose friendly disposition toward them there could be no reasonable doubt. But already, he could read their reply in their sullen looks, and charged them with insincerity, and denounced the course they meant to take.

Chap. xlvi. 10-12. (It is the Oracle of Jahveh :)

If only ye will stay in this land,  
 I will build you, and not pull down,  
 And will plant you, and not pluck up ;  
 For I repent of the evil that I have done unto  
 you ;  
 Fear not the King of Babel, of whom ye are  
 afraid ;  
 For I am with you, to succour and save you  
 from his hand ;  
 And he will show you pity, and 'stablish you  
 in your land.

Ver. 13-14.

But if so be ye say,  
 We will not stay in this land  
 But will go down to Egypt's land

Where we shall not see war,  
 Nor hear the trumpet's sound,  
 And dwell there;

Verses 15, 20. Now then, be well assured  
 That ye are sinning against yourselves.  
 For ye sent me, saying,  
 Pray to Jahveh for us,  
 And all that Jahveh saith,  
 We will do.

Verses 21-22. But ye have not hearkened  
 To Jahveh's voice,  
 Who hath sent me to you.  
 And now by sword ye shall die  
 In the place where ye desire  
 To dwell there.

[Verses 10-12. A long strophe, each line with four accented syllables. In verse 10, read Yāshōb for shōb ; omit the repetition in verse 11 ("Fear him not, saith Jahve") ; also the clause : For I will have pity on you (verse 12), introduced as exegetical of the following clause. The King of Babylon, in pitying Judah, is Jahveh's organ.

Then follow three strophes each with five lines of three accented syllables ; and a brief refrain. Certain slight omissions have to be made, e.g. the mention of *famine* in verse 14. This was so common an adjunct of war, that it slipped in here ; but with a plentiful harvest, they could not at this time feel the spur of famine.

Verse 15 begins with "and now." In the LXX this is immediately connected with verse 20. The intervening verses add nothing to the meaning of the passage. They are therefore omitted.]

It is not necessary to impute conscious hypocrisy to the people or their leaders in their negotiations with the prophet. Doubtless, they would have valued his support. Certainly, they were willing to wait for it ; and that, at a time in their history which called for promptness of action. But they had made up their minds that it was right to go to Egypt, and they

were not prepared to recognize as the voice of Jahveh, any that sought to hinder them. This is manifest from their subsequent action. When the prophet's judgment was given, they did not withdraw their professions of loyalty or their promise of obedience. At that stage, they showed themselves curiously jealous of the prophet's honour ; perhaps rightly so. They might require his services again, and his prophetic reputation was one of the few valuable assets remaining to the nation. Even the needle may be temporarily deflected from the pole ; so they indicate that, in their opinion, some sinister influence has been at work perverting the prophet's judgment. For want of a better, they suggest that Baruch has misled him. Nothing is more subtle than the mind of man, especially when it sets itself to work on religious problems. How many of us there are who pray for guidance, and persuade ourselves that we are waiting for the Holy Spirit to enlighten us, when what we really desire is permission to take our own way. At such a time we can all reason with admirable subtlety. Of course the Bible is the Word of God ; but what about its interpretation ? Of course we ought to pray ; but how can we be sure that we have received the answer ? Of course, if a thing is wrong we must not do it, we do not wish to do it ; but is it wrong ? Here is a limitless field for debate. Meanwhile the tide of opportunity has turned, and swept us with it down to Egypt, as we always meant it should.

Chap. xlivi, 8-13. The little band of exiles were now in Egypt at Tahpanhes, a royal city on the right bank of the Pelusiac branch of the Nile, and on the old caravan road for Syria. But in the heart of Egypt, as on the heights of Mizpah, Jahveh was with them. "The word of Jahveh came to Jeremiah in Tahpanhes."

As he walked by the river side the prophet took some loose stones, and buried them in the rich, loamy soil, in full view of Pharaoh's palace, foretelling a time when Nebuchadrezzar, whom the exiles hoped they had left far behind, would follow them, and set his throne upon these very stones, and array himself in the wealth of Egypt "like a shepherd wrapping his plaid about him." The figure is picturesque, and highly original ; it speaks of the ease and completeness of the conquest of the land. Not far from Tahpanhes, on the verge of the Desert, lay the famous city of Beth-Shemesh, or Heliopolis, with its vast Temple of the Sun. It was not difficult to foresee that, lying as it did right on the line of march, it must be the first to feel the force of the advancing foe. "He shall break the pillars of Beth-Shemesh, and the houses of the gods of Egypt he shall burn with fire." To-day a single obelisk marks the site of what was once a sacred city.

[There are various difficulties of a critical kind in connexion with this passage. The literal translation of verse 9 is as follows : Take great stones in thine hand, and bury them in mortar (bam-melet) in the pavement (bam-malben) which is at the entry of Pharaoh's house. This, of course, raises a question, Was the exiled prophet permitted to enter the palace, and break up its pavement ? The LXX give a much simpler version of the incident : Take to thee great stones, and bury them in the forecourt (*ἐν προθύροις*) in the gate of Pharaoh's house. Giesebricht's suggestion, followed by Erbt, is that for Bam-malben originally stood Mil-lipenē, or 'al-penē, which the LXX rendered by their somewhat pompous *ἐν προθύροις*. But what of Bam-malet, which nowhere else occurs ? Giesebricht proposes to read Bal-lat= in secret, following various Greek versions ; and this is adopted by Erbt, who imagines the whole transaction to have taken place by night. Against this view is the phrase : "In sight of the men of Judah" ; and indeed the whole conception of a sign, which excludes that of secrecy. It seems to me probable that the text is due to a slip of the copyist. He meant to write BM-MLBN, but

wrote BM-MLT ; and, after the custom of Eastern copyists, he let it stand, a nut for his readers to crack. The prophet's sign, then, was given openly, within sight of Pharaoh's palace but not within the palace court.

Verse 13 is rejected by many as a later insertion. It may be so, but I can see no reason why it should not be prophetic. It fits in with, and fills up, his representation of the future, leaving it still sufficiently vague.]

Chap. xliv. A single glimpse is given us of the life of the people in Egypt. They seem to have spread Southward into Upper Egypt. Yet they retained their identity as a separate community and seem to have met, from time to time, for the celebration of religious rites. The sufferings of the past decade had not yet broken the pride of their heart, or rid them of their deeply rooted tendency to idolatry. They resumed the worship of the Queen of Heaven which, apparently, had been suspended in Jerusalem during the reign of Zedekiah. In Egypt, as in the Temple courts, it is the women who take the lead in celebrating and defending these heathen rites. It is true they assert that they have the consent of their husbands (verse 19) ; but I imagine their husbands might have pleaded that they were scarcely free agents in the matter. The reading of their national history, given by these Hebrew matrons, is indeed curious. In their judgment the various calamities from which they were suffering were due, not to the nation's apostasy from Jahveh, but to the interruption of those very rites against which the prophet inveighs. They were due to that isolation from the surrounding nations to which the worship of Jahveh had condemned them. So long as they had done as their fathers did before them, worshipping the "genius loci," the ancestral gods of the land in which they dwelt, they were comfortable and lacked nothing ; but since the innovations of

Josiah's time all had been changed for the worse. Religious controversy is always bitter ; never more so than when, as here, it affects domestic life. Stung by the loss of home and children, which they regarded as the result of the mischievous policy championed by this old dotard of a prophet, they turned on Jeremiah. He, on his part, could only appeal from a past, which could be so strangely misread, to a future which should leave no doubt in any mind as to its meaning (verse 29). The following, rescued from a text which is largely corrupt, may be offered as representing the prophet's reply to these ladies :

Verse 25. Ye women who have spoken,  
 Saying, We will certainly do it,  
 Burning incense to the Queen of Heaven,  
 And pouring libations in her honour ;  
 By all means make good your vows,  
 Certainly do it.

Verse 26. Therefore hear ye Jahveh's word,  
 My name shall no more be heard  
 In the mouth of any Jew,  
 In Egypt's land.

Verse 27. Behold, I am waking over you  
 For evil and not for good ;  
 And all of Israel left shall know  
 Whose word shall stand.

[Chap. xliv is another excellent example of the Editorial methods to which we owe so much of the Book of Jeremiah. In verses 25-29 we have an oracle delivered by the prophet after the flight into Egypt ; the rest of the chapter is the setting provided for it.

Verses 1-14. The language is diffuse and conventional. Nothing is said of moral and political degeneracy ; attention is directed exclusively to the ritualistic practices of the country. In verses 15-19 we come into closer touch with original documents. In verse 15 the Editor does his best to keep the men to the front ; but, from what follows, it is quite evident that the women did the talking. In verse 17 ("Every word that has

gone out of our mouth":) there is a reference to some previous utterance, no doubt reported in the original documents, which has given place to the editorial introduction. Verses 20-23. The women had spoken; but the prophet's reply is addressed, according to the present text, to the whole nation. By this time the reader is on the tiptoe of expectation, but again (verse 24) arrest is laid on the narrative, and we have another somewhat involved introductory note. In verse 25 we find ourselves at last face to face with the prophet's audience. A last attempt is made to obscure the pointed denunciation of the women which follows, and which possibly seemed a little unchivalrous to refined ears. Instead of: Ye and your wives, read with the LXX, Ye women.

Erbt thinks that verse 26 is, like verse 25, irony, and renders thus: "Ye women, certainly do so. Let no one of the Jews in the land of Egypt, take My name into his mouth. Ye shall know whose word shall stand." But it seems to me that, if verses 25-26 read so, the inference according to verse 29 would be that their word, not Jahveh's, had stood. Some clearer declaration of Jahveh's purpose with them is certainly required (verse 27a). On the other hand, verse 26b ("Behold, I have sworn by My great name") is Editorial; verse 27b ("All the Jews, etc., shall perish") is exegetical of the phrase, All that are left, in verse 28; while verse 28a is from the same hand as the close of verse 14, and modifies a statement which seemed too absolute in the light of events.]

Verses 29 30 read thus: "And this shall be a sign unto you, saith Jahveh, that ye shall know that My word shall surely stand against you for evil; Thus saith Jahveh, Behold, I am giving Pharaoh Hophrah, King of Egypt, into the hands of his enemies, and into the hand of them that seek his life." Hophrah had been the ally of Judah in her struggle against Nebuchadrezzar; and it was in Egypt the exiles sought the safety and peace they despaired of finding elsewhere. Yet Egypt herself was tottering. In 570, after an unsuccessful war against the Libyans, Amasis rose against Hophrah, and took the throne. Of the discontent and disaffection which ended thus, some

early symptoms may have met the prophet's eye. But it is questionable whether the domestic affairs of Egypt came within his vision as a prophet, or were likely to find a place in his reasoning with Judah.

The subsequent history of the exiles in Egypt does not, at first sight, confirm the gloomy augury of this chapter. In the time of Alexander the Great they had attained to considerable numbers as well as to wealth and political influence, so that a portion of the newly founded city of Alexandria was given over to their use. There was, moreover, free and constant intercourse between Egypt and Judah. Commentators, bound by the fetish of a literal interpretation, have done their best to remove the apparent inconsistency. They have supposed that, as the result of this very oracle, a religious revival took place among the people, such as gave a new bent to their history, and made it possible for Jahveh to receive them again into favour. It is as easy to imagine what may have been, as it is impossible to say what was. We incline to think that the prophet himself would have discounted the material wealth and prosperity to which his people attained in Egypt, and would have reckoned their exclusion from the spiritual inheritance of their race as an adequate fulfilment of his word.

Such is the last word we have from Jeremiah. Where or how he ended his days, we do not know. One authority sends him back to Jerusalem; another far off to Babylon. Still another points out his grave at Tahpanhes, i.e. Daphne by the Nile. These are all purely legendary. A greater interest belongs to two notices of the prophet, which are found in later Jewish writings. In 2 Maccabees, chap. ii, we read that on the fall of the city the prophet "took the tabernacle, and the

Ark, and the altar of incense, with him to the Mount where Moses had met with God, and there deposited them in a cave, sealing the door. Some of those who were with him, afterwards tried to find the place, but could not, which he perceiving bade them desist, till such time as God should bring again His people and receive them to His mercy." In the same Book (chap. xv) we read that Judas, to encourage the people, "told them how Onias, the High Priest, when in prayer, saw an old man with grey hair and of excellent majesty. This, said he, is a lover of the brethren who prays much for our people and for the Holy City, to wit, the prophet Jeremiah. Whereon the prophet, holding out his right hand, gave to Judas a sword of gold, saying : Take this holy sword, a gift from God, with which thou shalt wound the adversary." These narratives have, of course, no historic value ; but there is in them a spiritual insight which has saved them from oblivion. They represent in parabolic form the prophet's relation to the past and future of his people.

Take the first. Israel's history is divided broadly into two periods, Pre- and Post-Exilic ; the one looking back to Moses, the other looking forward to Christ. Jeremiah belonged to the former. His own spiritual experience is rooted in the past ; the aim of his life had been to realize the old ideals of the nation. But he recognized that these had their limits, and that the time had come to transcend them. It is accordingly a fine conception that represents him taking into his aged hands what was most sacred in the past and restoring it to its source, hiding it in the shadow of the Mount from whose burning heart it came at first, reserving no more than the hope of brighter days in which it should receive spiritual fulfilment. Take now the second, and see in it the prophet's relation to the

future of his people. At first sight certainly it seems strange that, in that last and sternest struggle for independence, the Jews should draw their inspiration not from a great solider like Joshua, or Gideon, or even David, but from this tender and beautiful soul. Yet here again we find a spiritual truth underlying the legend. The greatest factor in history is not the sword which divides and destroys, but the Truth which quickens and unites. It is the religious ideal of the prophet that rallies a people and arms them with conquering strength in the day of battle.

And if from these legends we turn to the New Testament, it is still the same. The memorable words spoken by the Baptist of our Lord : " I indeed baptize with water, but He shall baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire," were not soon forgotten. They taught men to speak of Jesus as the second Elias, and to see much in Him which recalled the Prophet of Fire. But the words, while profoundly true, might easily prove misleading. The impression directly made on men's minds, by what they heard and saw of Jesus, by the tenderness of His spirit, and the patience with which He bore the long martyrdom of life, made them think rather of Jeremiah. " Some say Elias ; others Jermias." And that, beyond all else, was our prophet's meed of praise ; to have created a new ideal which was realized in the Perfect Life ; to have begun a work of self-denying service which received its crown in the sacrifice of the Cross.

## BARUCH

### CHAPTER XLV

THROUGHOUT the prophet's lifetime, Baruch acted as his amanuensis ; after his death he seems to have constituted himself biographer, and, in a certain sense, literary executor of the prophet. It is almost certainly to Baruch's hand we owe those vivid touches and that wealth of personal detail which have lent such a charm to our study of the book. He was the prophet's Boswell, with a devotion never surpassed, and without a trace of vanity or self-assertion. Already, on occasion, we have caught a glimpse of him at his work. We have seen him busy over the prophet's Roll ; we have seen him in the Temple court reading it, while the people stood with upturned faces ; we have seen him in the Council Hall, closely cross-questioned as to the authority by which he wrote and read. In this connexion a particular interest attached to a brief notice in chap. xlivi, 3. Readers may remember how, on the way to Egypt, the people asserted that Jeremiah had misapprehended Jahveh's purpose for them ; and then, anxious to safeguard the prophet's reputation, insinuated that Baruch had misled him. Ridiculous as the suggestion may appear to us, there must have been something in the man that rendered it at least plausible. Evidently the self-repression, so splendidly preserved, was only one side of a complex character. Something of the independent, and even commanding, there must have been about him. If

Jeremiah, like Paul, was the chief speaker, Baruch was like Barnabas of whom the mob at Lystra said that he was Jupiter. An air of mystery invested him ; and, to many, he seemed the controlling and compelling power behind the prophet. We shall see that this popular conception of Baruch is to some extent justified by the estimate given of him by the man who knew him best, his own Master.

At last the task of a lifetime is finished ; and Baruch, dropping the mask, discovers himself with a naïveté which is charming. He confesses himself as in no admirable mood ; discontented with his fortunes and disheartened over his work. He had toiled at the prophet's Roll, the insatiable prophet making ever fresh demands upon his time and strength to rewrite and enlarge it. He had shared the fortunes of the prophet, while they led him from worse to worse till at last, an exile in Egypt, he was compelled to abandon all the bright hopes with which he had started on life. "Woe is me now, for Jahveh adds toil to my travail ; I am weary as well as sad, and find no rest." We do not know in what direction Baruch's ambition lay. As the prophet's secretary he may once have hoped for a good appointment in the State ; or, like Milton, he may have aspired "to write something that the world would not willingly let die." It is enough to know that he was not wholly free from the last infirmity of noble minds. He sought "great things" for himself.

Let us see now how he is dealt with. "Thus saith Jahveh, Behold that which I have built, I, even I, pull down ; and that which I have planted, I, even I, pluck up." From his narrow sphere of labour Baruch's attention is challenged by the great Worker. The thought in verse 4 is that of the Divine Ideal of work,

patient strength, efforts made that seem to end in nothing, immediate results sacrificed in the interests of ultimate perfection. At the close of verse 4, we meet a phrase which is absent from the LXX ; " And this of the whole earth." On grammatical grounds we must regard the phrase as a later insertion ; but it is not without force and point, and anticipates the phrase, " On all flesh," in verse 6. Jahveh is the great Worker, not only in regard of His methods, but of the scale on which He works. The issues of any particular life must always appear unimportant compared with those which affect the whole earth. The poet says :

That loss is common would not make my own  
Less bitter, rather more.

Yet there is a fellowship in sorrow which, if it cannot sweeten pain, silences the murmur with which we are apt to meet it.

Secondly, Baruch is confronted by the promise of Divine protection amid all the uncertainties of life. " And thou, dost thou seek great things for thyself ? Seek them not. For behold I am bringing evil on all flesh, saith Jahveh. But I will give thee thy life for a spoil in all places whither thou goest." What is accidental (" Great things ") may be denied him ; what is essential to usefulness and happiness, the permanent and personal element (" Thy life "), is ensured him. Henry Martyn tells how, as he entered the Senate Hall at Cambridge to sit for his degree examination, these words came into his mind " and quieted him." The greatness which is not sought may come, as it came to him, Senior Wrangler and Smith Prize man ; the peace of mind which is the strength and beauty of a life shall be given to all who seek only to know the will of God and do it.

## THE ORACLES OF THE NATIONS

### CHAPTERS XLVI-LI

**I**N the LXX, as we have already seen, these Oracles of the Nations are embedded in the heart of chap. xxv, following on verse 13. The order in the Greek and Hebrew versions differs ; and the original place and order must both be left, as an open question. The question of authorship is equally doubtful, and must be raised in connexion with each chapter in succession. Chap. xlvi, 1 is a general introduction to the Section.

In point of value, these Oracles differ greatly. Chap. xlvi is lively ; chap. xlviii has a pathetic human interest which attracts us. Chaps. 1, li, form an oracle on a really great scale. The theme is striking, the Fall of Babylon ; and the treatment, in spite of a certain looseness which marks the train of thought, is worthy of it. The rest, concerning the Philistines, Ammonites, Edom, Syria, and the Arab tribes are, on the whole, pointless, and suggest that they have been written to order, so as to complete a scheme, rather than under pressure of any immediate emergency. Of all these only chap. lxvi, so far as my judgment guides me, has any pretension to be Jeremian.

Chap. xlvi consists of two oracles against Egypt, with a postscript directed toward Israel. The first (verses 2-12) may well have been written by Jeremiah, to celebrate the defeat of Necho at Carchemish in 604 B.C. Duhm rejects it, partly on account of its contents, and partly on account of its dependence on

later documents. (Cf. verse 10 with Isa. xxxiv, 5, 6, 8). As regards its dependence on Isa. xxxiv, which Duhm assigns to the age of John Hyrcanus (109 B.C.), it should be noticed that the verses in question (verses 9, 10) are in prose and, evidently, an interpolation. As regards the contents, usually judged to be *jejeune*, I confess myself unable to share in the depreciation. The passage seems to me rhythmic and regular in its structure, and, on the whole, stirring in its tone. Twice over the prophet pictures the marshalling and Northward march of the Egyptian army, and twice over, in two slightly longer stanzas, he describes the rout on the banks of the Euphrates. The following is a translation of this oracle :

## I

Verse 3. Order buckler and shield,  
And draw near to battle ;  
Verse 4. Harness horses, ye horsemen,  
Polish the spears ;  
And stand forth with helmets on,  
Clothe you with mail.

## II

Verse 5. Why are they panic-stricken,  
Why turn their backs ?  
They flee apace and rally not.  
Terror takes them round about.  
Verse 6. Let them not flee, nor make escape,  
The mighty ones, in the North land.  
For, by the river Euphrates,  
They stumble and fall.

## III

Verse 7. Who is this riseth like the Nile,  
With stormy waters ?  
Verse 8. Saying, I will go up and cover the earth,  
I will destroy its inhabitants.  
Verse 9. Go up, ye horses, and prance ;  
And let the mighty men go forth.

## IV

Verse 11. Go up by Gilead, and take balm,  
 Oh virgin daughter of Egypt.  
 In vain hast thou multiplied remedies.  
 There is no healing for thee.

Verse 12. The nations have heard thy cry,  
 The earth resounds with it.  
 For, man on man, they stumble,  
 And both are fallen.

[Verse 4 omit "Get up" (M.T.), inserted by analogy from verse 9; and transpose two of the clauses which follow. In v. 5, omit (both on grammatical and metrical grounds) the phrase: I have seen; also the clause: The mighty men are beaten down. If so—how could they flee away? Verse 6, omit: The Swift. The subject of both verbs is the same ("The mighty ones.") Verse 7, The advance of the victorious army is like the Nile when in flood. Omit: Like rivers. Omit also verse 8a (a repetition). Verse 8b omit: The city; and, in verse 9a, "The chariots (it is the horses, not the chariots that prance). Verse 12a. Omit: Thy shame. If retained, it must be read: Thy voice (cf. chap. iii, 9). Verse 12b Omit: Together.]

Verses 13-26. A second oracle follows, referring possibly to the invasion of Egypt by Nebuchadrezzar in 568 B.C., which may have been written by Jeremiah. The value of the heading is, however, doubtful; and the authorship and reference of the oracle must be regarded as uncertain.

The rout of the Egyptian army has now become the invasion of Egypt; and the fear of the advancing foe falls, like the shadow of Tabor or Carmel, across the land. Egypt itself is likened to an heifer with glossy hide, stung by a gadfly and maddened with pain; and, again, to a serpent frightened by the crash of falling timber and darting through the long, dry grass, with sudden swish. Her sound is that of a retreating serpent (verse 22). Meantime the people fall like a forest under the axe. The aptness of the figure is

apparent when we remember that the serpent encircling a globe is the ideograph for Pharaoh on the monuments. The oracle ends, as it began, with the gods of Egypt, which share the fate of their worshippers and feel the heavy hand of Jahveh.<sup>1</sup>

Verses 27, 28 are in the true post-Exilic style, comfortable words directed toward Israel.

<sup>1</sup> There is a reference to Pharaoh in verse 17: Call ye the name of Pharaoh, King of Egypt, a Crash; he hath let the appointed time pass by. Might we render this enigmatic name thus: Backwash, Turn-of-the tide? (Shaôn is used of the waves as they break—"with melancholy long-withdrawing roar." Compare Ps. lxxv 8 and Jer. li. 55. It is distinguishable from the gallim or cresting waves). The meaning, anyhow, is that Pharaoh has lost his chance either of making an Empire or of making peace with the foe. Schmidt (*Encyc. Bibl.*) gives a spirited rendering of the phrase, "War-whoop, capture of the troop." But this is based on the LXX, which merely transliterate the original ( $\Sigma\alpha\omega\nu \; \mathbf{\Sigma}\sigma\beta\epsilon\mathbf{i} \; \mathbf{\Sigma}\mu\omega\eta\delta$ ).





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